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VIDA

STUDY OF A GIRL

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BY

AMY DUNSMUIR

101072

In Two Volumes.

VOL. I.

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TO MY FATHER,

WHOSE UNFAILING INTEREST

FIRST ENCOURAGED MY CHILDISH PEN,

This Book

IS VERY AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

VIDA.

CHAPTER I.

THE minister's horse and gig had just disappeared, conveying their owner, the Reverend Gilbert Callander, to pay some pastoral visits in a distant part of his parish, while his daughter, who had been watching his departure, turned slowly and repassed the Manse on her way to the shore. What a wonderful afternoon it was! such as only September in Arran can boast. The summer sun, though bright

and cloudless still, fell with a subdued and mellow glow. The blue sea lay motionless under the blue sky; the tide was coming in, but so softly that the little waves in the bay, as they touched the gleaming sand, seemed to break in a whisper. The trees in the little wood behind had changed their summer green for a dress of brighter tints. A sorrowful meaning lies under the brilliant beauty of the red and yellow leaves. They are dying, they are losing hold; a few angry gusts among the branches, and their places shall know them no more. But the autumn wind is merciful to-day, and the wood is as still as the water.

The Manse stands just beyond the wood, near enough to be sheltered at one end by a few of the last straggling trees. It stands on a little bit of level ground, which

just affords room for the house and its little shed and outhouses, and immediately at the back of these rises into a steep and rocky bank; to the front there is no attempt at garden or enclosure; the grassy meadow, reaching up to the wall of the house, is the only lawn, and a very uneven one it is, breaking into innumerable little hillocks, intersected by various paths, and dotted with stray bushes and gray boulders, the latter becoming more numerous towards the end of the gentle slope where the green common gives way to the shingly beach. Behind the Manse the heathery ridge runs northward for several miles, so that the situation would be somewhat dreary, but for this strip of open ground beside the sea. A mile or two farther on the coast is wilder and more picturesque, the rocks become cliffs and headlands; behind

and between them the hilly ridge is broken into little clefts and valleys, lined in every sheltered corner with hazel-trees; this is where the nuts are to be found. The Manse itself is a plain two-storied building of gray stone; plainer it could scarcely be; yet there is a certain suggestion of comfort in its solid front and white blinds; the door is at the end next the wood, and from that a narrow road covered with gravel leads away under the low branches, shortly disappearing from the eye. There is no other visible connection between this remote spot and the outside world.

But while we are describing her home, little Vida Callander has been wandering along the shore, and her figure is now only distinguishable among the distant gray rocks by the little red cape that she wears on her shoulders. Vida long remembered

that September afternoon, though she could hardly have told why, and therefore we must linger over it a little. She was somewhat grave as she picked her way over the rocks, and when at length she sat down upon one of them there was a dreamy listless look on her round childlike face. Half an hour she sat, till the still beauty of the lonely shore began to impress her almost painfully. She was so solitary, sitting there; no one needing her, no one to come and search for her, no one to ask her what she was thinking *about*. Her father would not be back till night, and even when he was with her Vida never regarded him in the light of a companion. Then there was Nannie, who was certainly very good and very fond of her; but the feeling of responsibility connected with the charge of the motherless girl, which was

deeply felt by the faithful Scotch servant, had resulted in a severity and strictness of discipline which Vida hardly appreciated, and which prevented her from giving Nannie her full confidence. If her mother had only lived, thought Vida—but there she broke off and sprang to her feet, for she knew that when her musings reached that point they were apt to bring tears; and Vida was not sentimental, and did not like to cry when she could help it.

Just then she heard voices, and observed some of the village children coming over the green hill behind her, evidently on their way to the nut-trees. This was a welcome interruption. Vida knew them by name, and at once determined to join them and make their acquaintance; hitherto she had never done so, owing to Nannie's well-known views on such sub-

jects, but to-day her feeling of loneliness had become insupportable, and she must have companionship of some sort. So she set off at a run and presently overtook them.

"Your name is Jeanie Millar, isn't it?" she asked of the eldest, a girl slightly older than herself. "I see you are going after nuts. Will you let me go with you?"

Jeanie looked as stupid and awkward as only a Scotch child can look, and after waiting some time replied, with downcast looks:

"If ye please, mem. We canna hinder you."

The spirit of the reply was so different from what Vida expected that it provoked her somewhat.

"Don't call me 'mem,'" she answered a little sharply.

Now this was embarrassing to Jeanie Millar. The minister's daughter had accosted her in a somewhat extraordinary manner, and Jeanie probably thought that her answer had been both respectful and discreet. She walked on in abashed silence.

"I suppose there are a great many nuts this year," remarked Vida. This did not absolutely require an answer, so Jeanie thought it safest to give none. "Do you expect to find many?" Vida asked next.

After a short pause Jeanie replied, "I dinna ken, mem."

"Which part of the wood do you think is the best?"

"I canna say, mem."

Vida sighed. The other children had ceased their talk, and the whole group walked on in perfect silence.

"Let me take your hand," said Vida,

presently, to the youngest of the party, a white-haired boy of four, who, upon this alarming proposal, immediately retreated to the other side of Jeanie Millar, and clung to her dress.

"Geordie," said Jeanie, soberly, "whaur's your mainners?"

"It's a long way for him to walk," observed Vida, to which no one made any answer. Another long pause ensued. Vida grew tired of the solemn procession.

"Suppose we have a run down this hill," she said. "Now stop; once, twice, thrice, and away!" But in a few minutes she discovered that she was running alone, and that her companions, who had never quitted their deliberate pace, were staring at her, as if they thought she had lost her wits. She sat down on a stone till they came up. "Why didn't you run?" she asked;

but she knew better by this time than to expect any reply. In this way half an hour passed, and they reached the nut-wood. "I have no basket," cried Vida, as they plunged into its depths, "but I daresay my hat will do; there's not much sun." The little party separated; each one seeking a tree for him and herself. Vida could hear the voices and the laughter of the most distant, but those who found themselves near her said not a word. After a little she heard a stealthy whisper; it came from little Geordie, who was announcing to his next neighbour that he had "fand a seevensome" (*i.e.* seven nuts in one cluster). "Have you, Geordie? Let me see it," she cried, coming forward. But Geordie only looked very guilty, and walked away to a safer bush. About half an hour had passed when Vida heard the

sound of cart-wheels on the road at a little distance; looking up, she observed that it was the baker's cart, which passed through that neighbourhood three times a week, and thereupon bethought herself of one last expedient to gain the confidence of her rustic companions. Setting off at a run she soon overtook the cart, and with a little bit of silver, which had lain in her pocket for some weeks, purchased a large number of "cookies." These she carried in her arms back to the wood, and offered them to the children. The younger ones seized eagerly upon them, and ran off without a word. As for Jeanie Millar, she had come to the conclusion that such extraordinary generosity was not to be trusted, and when it came to her turn replied, with stoical indifference, "Na, thank ye, mem; I'm gaun hame to my tea."

Upon this Vida dropped the remainder of the good things upon the grass, saying, with some difficulty, "Perhaps you would take them if I were gone. I think I'll go home now. Good-bye." She ran rapidly out of the wood, and along the hillside, till she found a nook, close upon the shore, where she could feel safe. Here she sat down between two great rocks, and wept with all the vehemence and self-pity of a child. The first burst of tears fell over the thought of her loneliness and disappointment; the next was called forth by the recollection of a beautiful paint-box she had seen at Lamlash, which she might have bought with her lost sixpence. "Twenty-five paints in it," sobbed Vida; "and I've no one to care for me; no sister, and mamma's dead, and I'm all alone."

Such sorrow is the peculiar luxury of

childhood; there is nothing to qualify, and nothing to complicate it. As we place our troubles in new positions, and magnify them to our heart's content, no sense of incongruity disturbs us, no reasoning arises in the mind to moderate our grief; no regard for appearances, no consideration for others, interfere between us and the relief of tears. We see only ourselves, wronged, ill-used, made miserable; and we feel that we are rightly indignant. Sweet, pure, enviable sorrow, leaving no trace of hardness, or bitterness, or gloom.

Yet Vida thought herself an unhappy child enough as she rose to go home, and, doubtless, so she was. She walked wearily, for she felt tired. As she drew near home, a gig overtook her, and the driver pulled up as he drew near her. Looking up, Vida saw a friend of her father's, Mr.

William Jeffrey, a neighbouring minister. On his invitation she mounted silently to the seat beside him, for he was on his way to her father's house, and held out her hand somewhat wearily. The newcomer was a man between thirty and forty years of age, tall, and slightly made; he stooped a little; his face was pale, his features finely cut, his eyes thoughtful. The expression was exceedingly pleasant and gentle, with some touches of sadness about the mouth. His aspect would have been most attractive but for a certain timidity about him, which seemed to bind and constrain what should have been a strong and telling character. The smile with which he greeted Vida gave an almost womanly sweetness to his countenance. "I think you are tired, Vida. Have you walked far?"

"Yes, a good way," said the little damsel beside him, adding to herself, "I think he might call me *Miss* Vida now."

"Something has been troubling you," continued Mr. Jeffrey, who had been observing her more attentively.

"Oh no," said Vida, with the air and feelings of a martyr. He was silent a moment, and she thought he was going to drop the subject. Upon this she felt much aggrieved, and yet, when he resumed it after a short scrutiny of the reins, she felt displeased with him for doing so.

"Won't you tell me what is the matter?" Vida's broad little hand was raised in a slight imperative wave of dismissal, while she said in a different tone, "I hope your headaches are better, Mr. Jeffrey."

"Much better, thank you; but I want

to hear about you. I might be able to help you a little."

"You could not," said Vida abruptly.

"I might," he said with gentle persistence, "if you would tell me."

"Well, then," said Vida, who was out of temper, "I *will* tell you, and you will see how much you can help me. I was crying because mamma is dead."

She did not see the look of tenderness that he cast on her petulant little face, nor could she have understood it. It was, perhaps, a mark of his wisdom that he gave her no answer. As they drew near home, Mr. Callander's gig overtook them.

"Ah, Jeffrey, glad to see you. What, Vida, you up there too? You are honoured to-day."

The words did not please Vida just then; she only answered by a slight shrug of

the shoulders, too slight for her father to notice.

"It is I who am honoured," Mr. Jeffrey hastened to say, and he uttered the words with a quiet simplicity, as one who spoke the bare undeniable truth.

As they entered the house tea was preparing in the little parlour, where a brisk evening fire cheered the early twilight.

At the table the two gentlemen soon became engaged in quiet conversation on literary and ecclesiastical topics. As for Vida, her attention not being claimed, she was free to turn her eyes to the fire and let her thoughts rove. For the first time in her life it struck her that the coming evening was blank and dreary to look forward to. She glanced at her father and his friend; they were discussing, in low animated tones, Howell's last pamphlet, and she

wearily wondered how such things *could* interest them. Then her eye fell on the little side-table which held the books; she knew them all by heart, and the sight of their backs, ranged in such precise order, seemed to irritate her. Beside them was a bit of knitting; it was only that morning that she had learnt a new stitch, and she had almost come to the point where the pattern would begin to show; yet she did not go to fetch it; why should she knit? Why should she learn new patterns? Nobody cared; it made no difference to anybody. Vida rose, and, going to the window, raised the sash, and peered out under the white blind. The look-out was towards the sea; it was not a stormy night, but there was a slight wind of the cool cynical kind getting up; the trees seemed to shiver under it; the faint moonlight was lost

among the clouds; the low plash of the waves sounded sad through the dim distance. Vida leaned far out, and yielded herself to the influences without. The talk went on within. Mr. Callander rejoiced in Mr. Jeffrey's company, chiefly because, as a listener, he was both appreciative and modest, with sufficient mind to praise and admire discreetly, but not enough to originate or contradict, except rarely. It might be that occasionally there was more criticism than Mr. Callander knew behind those gray attentive eyes; but Mr. Jeffrey was the younger man, decidedly the inferior in learning, the inferior also in self-confidence; he had no great reason to believe in his own opinions, for they had never done much for him, and no one else had ever implicitly believed in them. He had lived an obscure life, and he would not

count much upon his own experience, having had at times glimpses of larger light which showed him how small it was. He could not honestly assert himself, for the ideal that was ever before his eyes was so high that it left him no chance of being satisfied with what he was. He had never known a great joy, a crushing sorrow. He had never been freed by the shock of a strong emotion from the trammels of morbid self-consciousness, from the yoke of petty uninteresting circumstance, from the bonds of a shy, narrowing, embarrassment and hesitation. Therefore you do not see the man as he might be, as he will be some day.

Of Mr. Callander, on the other hand, it might be said that he was cut and dry, whether duly ripe or not. Observe that small face of his, surrounded by abundant

gray hair; it bears a withered look, though he is under sixty; his form is spare and active, and his health is excellent. This man has been somewhat disappointed, and his nature was not large enough, or sweet enough to grow thereby; so the heart has shrivelled a little and shrunk back—it is harder to reach it than it used to be. A certain natural reserve has thickened into a cold hard sort of dignity, which forbids him to seek sympathy or exhibit feeling. But to-night there is a tinge of brightness on the usually unexpressive countenance; he is talking of books, and as he is a student and a scholar he is in his element, as far as he can be at home and at ease in any element.

At length Mr. Callander left the room to look for a book. Mr. Jeffrey's eyes were turned towards Vida, who had not

stirred from her position behind the blind; he rose to his feet, moved by some impulse which he promptly checked, for he sat down again the next moment. Presently Vida drew in her head with a half-sigh, as if the cessation of voices had roused her, and proceeded to draw down the window and close the shutters. Again Mr. Jeffrey rose and stepped forward, but paused again in front of the fire. Vida bade him good-night, and left the room. She did not feel like herself, and determined to get to bed as soon as possible, knowing that once there no trouble in the world could keep her from sleeping.

When she awoke next day, and looked out on the lovely morning light glittering over the sea, her dreary and lonely feeling of the night before seemed like a dream, and she laughed at herself. But with the

chilly evening the dream often returned, and Vida began to feel, in a vague way, that she was no longer sufficient to herself as she once had been. And the winter was coming, with its scanty sunshine and stormy winds and long days indoors; but there had been a winter every year, and she could not remember ever feeling very unhappy about it. Then Vida would rise indignantly, shaking her head, and wondering that it could harbour such foolish thoughts.

CHAPTER II.

About two years before the time of which we are writing, Nannie had presented herself one morning in her master's study, with the request that he would take into consideration the matter of Miss Vida's "eddication."

"I've dune for her a' that I could," said Nannie, "and impairted till her a' that I ken mysel'. And now, sir, it budes me to say that anither teacher maun be provided. And if it should be your pleasure to"—here a failing in the voice—"to pit a governess

ower me i' my last days, and to subjec' the bairn to look doon upon her auld nurse, I'll say ne'er a word to hinner it."

Mr. Callander, whose thoughts were still busy with the book he had been reading, did not quite understand the bearing of these remarks, but he concluded, from Nannie's tone and general expression, that she was making some offer about Vida, probably a magnanimous one.

"You won't hinder what, Nannie? I don't quite——"

"I'll hinder naithing, sir," said Nannie, with new emphasis, "that ye judge to be for the bairn's gude, unless, I *maun* say, sir, that I wadna like to see her ta'en frae hame, for if that toothache comes back on her the way it did last winter——"

"From home! Vida is not going from home," said Mr. Callander, still bewildered.

"Aweel, sir, I'm glad o' that," answered Nannie; "and if she'll just leave my kitchen i' my ain poo'er, and let me tak' my ain ways, and no owerfash me wi' her notions, I'll obey her orders, gin they be sensible; and I'll dae her every honour and respec' that's suitable, as lang as she kens her ain place and keeps till it. It's the governess I'm meanin', sir," she added, seeing Mr. Callander's evident confusion.

"Governess?" said Mr. Callander, "I don't think I should like a governess; I don't see what Vida wants with a governess."

A gleam of joy overspread Nannie's countenance, but she said earnestly, "I wadna like ye, sir, to come at any settlement aboot it wi'out thinkin' it weel ower."

"Very well," said Mr. Callander, seeing a chance of escape, "I will, Nannie; I'll

think over it." With that he took up his book, and Nannie withdrew. The conclusion to which Mr. Callander's thinking led him was that the best solution of the difficulty would be to teach Vida himself. This would save any disturbance of existing arrangements, and that was a great point; for Mr. Callander was possessed by a narrow unmeaning conservatism, which was not so much attachment to the old as cowardly distrust of the new. It also appeared to him that to undertake the charge of his daughter's education would be a proper and fatherly proceeding on his part. He had often felt uneasily that Vida wanted more guidance, more training than he gave her; here was a way of filling up the deficiency. As to *what* he should teach her, he had all his own old school-books, and college-books too, chiefly classical.

What could be better for her than the classics? It was possible that these were not universally taught to young ladies; there might be other branches in which they were more generally educated, but these were probably trivial, and if it was Vida's lot to study Latin and Greek instead —well, she might thank her good fortune. He could easily spare an hour or two each day, if it must come to that, and the task of introducing another mind to his favourite studies would not be wholly distasteful. Most likely Vida would be very slow—here Mr. Callander sighed; but he must expect some difficulty and some call for self-denial. And there was probably a saving clause behind, to the effect, that if the teaching proved *too* irksome it might be dropped, and some other plan might suggest itself.

Consequently, he requested Vida one morning to follow him to his study, and, after a few preliminary observations with regard to the study of Latin, he produced an old Latin Grammar, and began to explain the first page to her. Her clear eyes, fixed full on his face, embarrassed him a little. They seemed to take in all that he said, and, going beyond that, to be reading himself too. At length he set her a short lesson, and gave her the book. To his surprise she brought it back in a few moments. He listened in silence while she began with "*Penna, pennæ.*" As each right word fell easily and smoothly into its own place his wonderment increased, and though, when she had done, he only said, "Very well, we may go on to the next," Vida felt that somehow she had found favour in his eyes. From that day the

lessons had gone on steadily. Vida felt the relief from idleness very pleasant; and though she would probably have cared little for learning lessons had she had access to the ordinary pleasures and occupations of childhood, yet her active mind, disengaged and restless as it was, turned readily into the only groove that was open to it; and by-and-by the enthusiasm of study awoke within her. As for Mr. Callander, he soon came to enjoy teaching so apt a pupil. The quickness of that ordinary phenomenon, a girl's mind, was quite a new object for Mr. Callander's observation, and he could not understand the rapid advances Vida made, compared with what he remembered of his own slow progress through the same books. To be sure she had a good teacher; still her mind must be worth something; he began to

feel proud of it. As for Vida, she was able for the first time to appreciate in some degree her father's remarkable learning. She saw him to advantage for the first time in her life, and accordingly she viewed him with new respect, so that a certain bond was formed between them.

It was simply an intellectual friendship, perfectly calm and cool, and very different from the tender bond that so often exists between father and daughter; yet, such as it was, it was pleasant to both, for it was the warmest feeling either of them had ever yet experienced for the other, at least since Vida had passed the age of helpless infancy. To Nannie the new arrangement was highly satisfactory. She regarded Mr. Callander as a storehouse of learning, though otherwise rather a useless individual, and she doubted not

that Vida's education was now safely provided for. Nevertheless, she deemed it desirable to interrogate Vida privately shortly after the lessons had begun, as to what she learned, so as to be sure that no *important* branch was being neglected.

"Nae jography?" she exclaimed in a tone of consternation, with hands uplifted when Vida had informed her, in reply to her questions, that that was not one of her studies.

"What is jography?" inquired Vida.

"Eh, hoo suld I tell ye?" answered Nannie, "but it's a thing"—with much emphasis—"that *a'* body suld unnerstan."

"But, Nannie," said Vida simply, "if it's a thing *a'* body should understand, why don't you?"

Nannie knit her brows for an instant,

but immediately began in a deep tone of reproach:

"And hoo mony's the time I've tellt ye, Viday, the sma' jistice my schoolin' got? Wi' a deein' mither at hame, and seeven brithers and sisters to bring up my lane, hoo was I to learn jography? Aye, Viday," added Nannie, by way of clenching her argument, and finally settling her opponent; "it's but little sic wark *ye* ken, that has ne'er dune a hand's turn but for your ain pleasure."

Vida felt reproved, and made no answer; she saw herself in some vague way accountable for not being one of a large family of brothers and sisters, though conscious at the same time that she would have been only too happy to have had a dozen. This sort of tacit reproof is frequently employed by older people as a means of extorting silence and

submission from younger spirits, and is certainly rather an unfair way of using experience.

"But I learn Latin, Nannie, and papa says he will teach me Greek by-and-by."

"They're no studies for young leddies, they," returned Nannie shortly, and a pause ensued. At length Nannie continued:

"And drawin', and paintin', and the pianny, and singin', and embroidery; it's an awfu' pity your brother got awa' the auld pianny."

"I don't mind about the piano, Nannie; last time I was at Campbelton, Mary tried to teach me, but I couldn't do it at all; I think my fingers are too fat." And Vida glanced at them critically.

"And what wunner if they are?" answered Nannie; "when ye ken fine that ye will *no* pit on gloves, though I speak till I'm tired.

What can ye expec' but that your haun's'll be as clumsy and as brown as a pleughman's? Eh, if ye had seen the han's yer mamma had!"

"But for drawing, Nannie, you know I *do* draw a little," said Vida slowly, referring to a certain sketch-book containing some youthful attempts, each of which had been duly shown to Nannie, and highly admired by her, in its turn.

"Pity me, Miss Viday, that's no drawin'," was the blunt reply. "That's naething but bairns' wark. Ye'll sune be ready to pit that book awa' wi' yer auld doll."

"Then what *is* drawing, Nannie?" said Vida, covering her mortification with an expression of earnest inquiry.

"Weel," answered Nannie thoughtfully, "afore ye can draw, ye maun hae the *principles* o' the thing; that's to say, the

fundations. Ye need—weel, ye need a big board, that'll haud a large piece o' paper. And the paper suld be thick, maist like cairdboard; and a gude wheen pencils; ye canna draw wi' *ae* pencil; I'm sure yer mamma had near a dizzen; ye couldna dae wi' less then *six* onyway; and there's mair bits of things that I dinna mind; in short, as I said, ye maun get the *principles* o' the thing."

"But, Nannie, we could buy those things somewhere."

Nannie shook her head doubtfully. "It wad hae to be gane aboot in a richt way," she said. "Then there's singin' and dancin'," continued Nannie mournfully, "and it canna be expeckit that your faither suld teach ye they." Vida's smile broadened at the idea of her father giving instruction in either of these branches. "It's an awfu' pity," con-

tinued Nannie, "to bide in sic an oot-o'-the-way place. I'm sure I dinna ken hoo ye're ever to be turned intill a young leddie here."

Vida drew up her head. "I *am* a young lady, Nannie," she said emphatically, "either here or anywhere else."

"Weel, weel," answered Nannie, in a deprecating tone; not, however, without a certain satisfaction in the rebuke. She did not consider that there was any insubordination in a touch of haughtiness like this. It was only right from her mistress's daughter, and was rather reassuring than otherwise, as it seemed to indicate a future capacity of worthily filling the place of mistress herself. "I think I'll be awa' to my manglin'," she said, after a moment's pause, "and ye can bring doon thae stockin's o' yours that's lyin' frae the last washin', and mend them aside me.

I'se warran' I'll mak ye a gude *darner*, though I can dae nae mair; and there's mony a waur airt than that."

So the conversation ended for the time. It left a considerable impression on Vida's mind, however, to the effect that there existed a vast field of knowledge, with which she was entirely unacquainted, and likely to remain so. After some reflection it occurred to her that possibly the shelves of dusty books in her father's study might offer some means of enlightenment. Hitherto her reading had been very limited; and, until her regular studies began, she had never cared about it. She owned a few little books of her own, but the only two she cared about were "Robinson Crusoe" and the "Swiss Family Robinson," with their enchanting incidents of out-door life. The others belonged chiefly to a

sort of children's literature, which is only too abundant nowadays—religious stories, utterly trashy in composition, with a vein of weak sermonising to recommend them to parents and friends. These she had received from Mary, her sister-in-law at Campbelton, from time to time, but she did not treat them with much respect. After running once through them to catch the thread of the story, they were generally put on the little book-shelf above the parlour-table, and it was only a *very* wet afternoon, or a *very* long and dull evening, that would tempt Vida to disturb them again. She had never thought of her father's books as possessing any interest, probably because they interested him; but now it occurred to her that it might be worth while to try; and accordingly, the first afternoon that she saw him leave the

house for a long walk, she found her way to the study. In one corner of the room a shoal of books had been thrown down on the floor, and left in confusion. Here she seated herself on the carpet. The first two were Latin; the next was a manual of botany; then a bright red cover attracted her attention, and she picked it out; it was an almanack ten years old. First came twelve funny little pictures, which Vida surveyed curiously, a pair of scales, a lion, a crab, and what not: this would do for to-day. Vida took it downstairs with her. In the evening, when tea was over, and Mr. Callander had gone upstairs, Vida did not, as usual, pay a visit to Nannie in the kitchen, but took out her book, and sat down at the table. When half an hour had passed, Nannie opened

the door and peeped in. She was greeted by the unexpected question :

"Nannie, what's the House of Commons ?"

"Eh ?"

"What's the House of Commons ?"

"It's in Lunnon," replied Nannie.

"But *what* is it ?"

"I daursay it's the house whaur the Queen bides," hazarded Nannie doubtfully.

"But, Nannie, it's a great list. It's the names of a great many men. What does it mean ?"

"Oh, weel," replied Nannie quickly, "it'll be the Parli'ment, mair like."

Vida still looked, uncomprehending.

"The Parli'ment's a great big meetin'," said Nannie. "It's jist like the Assembly o' the Kirk, only they can dae whatever they like, and I think it's hadden a' the

year roond. When I was wi' Mrs. Kirkconnel, afore I gaed to yer grandmamma, I mind her brither gaed into Parli'ment. I dinna ken what they pay them, but I'se warran' ye it was a gran' thing for him. He gied up his business the very year efter, and never needed to dae ony mair while he lived, excep' makin' speeches, and surely *that* canna be hard wark."

"Well, Nannie," said Vida, again referring to her book, "what's the Army List?"

"It's a' the fechtin' folk," returned Nannie shortly. She did not relish this catechising.

"And what's bankers and banking?"

"Whaur folk pits their siller."

"And, Nannie, what does 'Roman Catholic Church' mean?"

"Viday," returned Nannie solemnly, "the less that ye ken o' that, and the langer ye are o' kennin' it, the better."

"Is it something *wicked*, Nannie?"

"It's the sate o' the wumman o' Babylon," was the answer, given with gloomy emphasis; "and I dinna think that's a fit book for you to read, if it pits sic thochts i' yer heed."

"Well, Nannie, here is another place. It says, 'The Post Office Regulations."

But Nannie had had enough of this.

"If ye dinna ken what the *Post Office* is wi'out speirin', after a' the letters ye've ta'en there, ye're little better than a fule. I'm gaun back to my kitchen, for I ha'ena time for sae mony clavers;" upon which Nannie retired with dignity.

The faithful old servant had an indistinct feeling of soreness at heart. This little one, whose whole life until lately had been within her scan and subject to her influence, was beginning now to get beyond her, to

ask questions she could not answer, to form wishes she could not gratify. Even now, was she not buried in this new book, absorbed and contented, although Nannie had left her in displeasure? Once, she would have followed her old nurse, and coaxed her till she smiled again; but now she seemed independent of her, indifferent to her impatient mood, able to be happy without her. Nannie's eyes filled slowly as she seated herself with her sewing at the kitchen-fire. These are hard moments.

But the parlour-door opens, and Nannie dashes her hand across her eyes. With two bounds Vida is beside her, on the low stool, too, where she has not sat for a long time.

"I've put away the book, Nannie; and my garters are finished, and I'm going to make a little shawl for you; and would

you like it knitted or crocheted, and how many stitches should I put on?"

Vida did not fail, however, to find her way back to the books, and many a long hour she spent among them; in fact, she was always in the study when her father was not. She felt no inclination to share it with him; not that she was afraid in his presence, or anxious to conceal her new occupation from him; but there was not between them that sympathy which must exist where two people are content to spend hours of silence in each other's company.

Vida read insatiably after a little. The day when she found Macaulay's History of England was the first great epoch in her reading. Then a small quaint old school history turned up, to gratify the curiosity which that wonderful fragment had excited, to tell her what came before

and what followed after that brief illuminated period. Old Greek and Roman history she learned with her father; Latin and Greek made great progress. Of geography she gained her first idea from an old railway guide, her next from a classical atlas. She read memoirs, treatises, controversies, poems; but the last were few, chiefly confined indeed to "Paradise Lost" and Robert Burns. Thus her mind became, in a manner, filled up if not furnished, and for a while she was content. But a time came when she wearied of her quiet home, when her books seemed dull and lifeless, when she began to sigh for fresher companionship, for more warmth, more glow, more movement in her life. She first became clearly conscious of this feeling on that September afternoon which we have described.

As the winter passed on, she often found herself peering into the future, and wondering whether anything would ever happen to her; and when the bright spring days returned her pulses beat, not only with health and childish energy as of old, but with a bounding expectancy of larger life which the summer might bring. Any stray visitor who ever came always came in summer. Then there was talk of her father going to Glasgow for a day or two; perhaps he might take her with him. And her half-brother Frank and his wife would visit them; and Mary had a baby to bring this time, a little boy only three months old. So altogether, Vida felt pleased that summer was coming.

CHAPTER III.

"I HAVE somethin' to say to ye," Nannie announced one morning in May, when she came into the parlour to carry away the breakfast dishes. Vida was there alone. "I didna get ye tellt last nicht, wi' Mr. Jeffrey's bein' here, and you stayin' oot sae lang — there was twa leddies here yesterday."

Vida turned at this. "When, Nannie?"

"Weel, I maun tell ye the haill story;" and with that Nannie sat down. "It was aboot half-past three when I heard a knock

at the door, and there was twa leddies stannin'—rael leddies wi' silk goons and black velvet cloaks (no that *that* makes a leddie aether, but ye could see they were leddies forbye their claes). Weel, they askit if Mrs. Callander was at home." Nannie's voice trembled.

"Mrs. Callander," repeated Vida, bewildered, "mamma——"

"Bairn," said Nannie softly, "it brocht the tears to my auld een. I hadna heard thae words for lang, tho' mony's the time I've answered to them. Sae I tellt them it was twal' lang years sin' she gaed till a better hame. Then they said, 'Was Miss Callander in?' Ye were awa' on the shore, and I was weel pleased ye were oot o' the road, for I kent ye had on that auld blue frock that's lost a' its colour sin' it was washed. And mair than that, I had taen

a' my shirts to the parlour to iron, for the kitchen-table was covered wi' scones, and I wadna liket to shaw them in. Sae I said ye were oot, and they gied me thae to gie you, and gaed awa'." And Nannie produced two calling-cards, and handed them to Vida.

Vida examined them curiously. On one was inscribed "Mrs. Hope," on the other, "The Honourable Mrs. Stanley." "What are they for, Nannie?"

"They're cairds," answered Nannie, "and they are jist for civeelity. Ladies leaves them at ane anither's hooses."

"But what should I do with them, Nannie?"

"Weel, yer mamma had a wee gilt basket she keepit hers in, i' the toon, but it wadna be worth your while for twa. Ye'll better pit them on the chimney-piece."

Vida carefully proceeded to follow this advice. "But, Nannie, where could the ladies come from?"

"Weel, I think they're stoppin' at The Mains. There was to be new folk there this summer, and James Baillie tellt me they had taen the hoose for four months."

"But why should they come here?"

"Weel, I daresay they ken that Mr. Callander's the minister, and they think it's a proper respec' to ca'. And now that they've dune that, Viday, ye canna dae less than gang up the morn, and ca' upon them."

This was a startling proposition. "Oh, Nannie, how can I?"

"Ye needna ask hoo ye can, for ye maun. Ye have need to think, Veday, that ye're no a bairn ony langer. Ye've rin aboot the shore, and played yersel' lang

eneuch, and ye're the minister's dochter, and it's time ye suld tak' somethin' upo' yersel'. A' yer books and readin' 'll be naither here nor there, if ye dinna learn gude sense and gude mainners. Sae ye'll pit on yer best things the morn, and gang to mak' yer ca', as ony young leddy suld dae."

"What shall I say to them, Nannie?" asked Vida meekly.

"Ye can say first, 'It's a fine day,' or 'A bad day,' as the case may be."

"But they'll know that themselves," said Vida, looking puzzled.

"Hoots, that's naething. When ye're speakin' jist for something to say, and for civeelity, it's nae odds whether folk kens't afore or no. And ye can ask hoo they like Arran, and tell them aboot some o' yer walks. But I'm sure," said Nannie

with emphasis, "I hope they'll ne'er meet ye on ony o' them, for what wi' yer hat in yer hand, and yer hair fleein' to the winds, and maybe yer stockin's aff, it wad be a while or they wad ca' here again. And that 'minds me, ye'll no pit on that blue frock again, Viday; I'm gaun to gie't to Jeanie Millar, and yer broon hat wi't."

"My brown hat? Then I'll have to wear my white one, and it's far too good for every day."

"It's nane too good. It's nae mair than ye suld hae. It does na maitter i' the winter, but ye see ye dinna ken wha ye may meet i' the simmer, and we canna be a' disgraced wi' *your* auld hats."

The operation of dressing, which Vida had to undergo at Nannie's hands the next afternoon, was a lengthy one, and when she

was at last free to start, she presented a somewhat quaint appearance. Over her white dress Nannie had put a large silk shawl of her mamma's, with deep fringes, which Vida had never seen before, and her brown childish face looked out through a white lace veil, which unwonted encumbrance made her feel very uncomfortable. Nannie had also furnished her with a pale silk parasol. The day was showery, and Vida suggested that her umbrella might prove more serviceable. "Wad ye carry *that* intill a leddy's drawin'-room?" answered Nannie, directing a glance of contempt at the peg where hung the umbrella in question, a black alpaca one, with that *bulginess* of outline which marks the lower class of umbrellas. So Vida gave in, and could only hope, as she set out, that the rain would allow her and her finery to get under shelter

before it broke forth. She walked thoughtfully along the road, not much liking the business on hand. It was not that she felt shy; she was not a shy child. But the position was new to her, and she feared lest, by something she should do, or say, or omit, she might betray her ignorance to those who knew better. It was not often any such anxiety troubled Vida, and it was almost gone before she reached The Mains, so that she had leisure to admire some fine old trees that stood about the house, and to make friends with a large dog that was strolling along the walk.

"Good heavens, mamma!" said the Honourable Mrs. Stanley, her attention arrested in the middle of a yawn, "what can this be coming up the avenue?"

Mrs. Hope walked across the drawing-room to her daughter, who sat at the

window, looked out, and replied: "A visitor from the sunny south, I should think, to judge by her attire."

The pale blue shawl, and the pale pink parasol proceeded steadily to the house, and presently a servant knocked, and Vida was announced. She came in slowly, not abashed but somewhat grave, which gravity rather increased under the easy conventional flow of Mrs. Hope's greeting.

"We were unfortunate on Tuesday. So sorry to miss you. And how kind of you to think of calling upon us so soon."

"It was Nannie that sent me," said Vida, with childish honesty; "I did not wish to come, but Nannie said I must."

"And who is Nannie?" inquired Mrs. Hope, with an amused expression.

"Nannie is our servant. She used to be my nurse long ago, and I always do what

she tells me—at least, generally, because mamma is dead."

"It must be very dull for you," said Mrs. Hope.

"Is there any society here?" inquired Mrs. Stanley, in a tone half languid and half contemptuous. Vida looked up for an explanation.

"Anyone to visit with?" said Mrs. Hope.

Vida considered. "Papa and I sometimes take tea with Miss Starforth at Carrachan," she said, "but we have not been lately, for she has been in bed all the winter. And there is Mr. Jeffrey. He is a minister, and often drives over to see papa—once a month at least. And papa visits the poor people when they are ill."

The eyes of the two ladies met. "It is unendurable!" said the younger.

"We had no idea what sort of place

this was," said Mrs. Hope, good-naturedly explaining to Vida. "A friend took the house for us for four months, and we have just been wondering whether we shall be able to put up with it so long."

Vida was bewildered. Here were these two ladies comfortably settled in The Mains house, which had always been her very ideal of a desirable residence, with *such* trees, with such a view from the windows—here were these ladies, settled here for four months, four lovely summer months, wondering whether they could stand it so long! It was inconceivable. There was something in her look of innocent wonder which made Mrs. Hope, somehow, just the least bit ashamed of herself. "You see it always rains," she said, almost apologetically.

"Oh no," said Vida, who was quite

unused to the free expressions of polite society; "it was fine yesterday, and last week there was one dry day." Mrs. Stanley laughed.

"Well," said Mrs. Hope, "when it rains six days out of seven, don't you consider the weather bad?"

"Not *very* for spring," said Vida.

"You discourage me more and more," said Mrs. Hope, with a comic look of despair.

"Oh, but," said Vida eagerly, "in June and July there will be dry days, and even on wet days there will be an hour or two fine. And then if you go out the air is cool, and the roadsides are so green after all the showers, and the little stones in the bay shine out white with the wet upon them, and the sun puts the clouds out of the way, and looks out so bright and warm."

"And while you are enjoying these beauties," said Mrs. Hope, "another pelting shower comes on, and drives you into the house."

"Yes," said Vida, innocently accepting the suggestion, "and then the rain patters down upon the leaves all round you, and everything else is quiet, and the sea grows dark, and the white sails, far away, look whiter than ever—oh, it is beautiful! But you don't always need to go into the house. If you have a cloak you will do very well under a big bush in the wood, or if you have old clothes you don't need to mind. And you can take your hat off and hide it in your lap if you don't wish it spoilt."

"But then your head will get wet," objected Mrs. Hope.

"I don't mind that much," said Vida,

"and my head is accustomed to it, for it has to be wet every day before my hair is curled."

"And does your father walk with you often?" asked Mrs. Hope.

"Papa?" said Vida. "Oh no! papa always walks by himself, and I walk by myself. You see, papa walks on the roads, but I like better to go through the fields, and up into the trees, and places like that."

Why did not Mrs. Hope look shocked? Probably because she knew that if she did Vida would not understand it. The Honourable Mrs. Stanley, however, looked disgusted enough for two.

"I think I have stayed long enough, now," said Vida, gravely appealing to Mrs. Hope's superior knowledge.

"Very well, my dear. I shall see you

again. I daresay we shall meet often through the summer."

"I will come back," said Vida unhesitatingly, "I will come back whenever you like. I like very much to look out of these windows. At home we can't see so far, because the house is lower down and the wood comes in the way. But the wood is pretty too."

So Vida took her departure.

"What a disagreeable vulgar child," said Mrs. Stanley. "Mamma, you had better take care, you will have more of her than you want. She evidently sees what sort of people we are, and she is cunning and is trying to become acquainted with us."

"I don't agree with you," said Mrs. Hope; "I think she is perfectly honest and simple. Did you not hear

her say that she would come because she liked to look out of the windows? No one with the slightest cunning could have said that."

"Well, it was a rude thing to say," said Mrs. Stanley, adroitly changing her ground; "I dislike those forward independent children."

"Children are not all made alike," said Mrs. Hope in a leisurely way; "I thought her independence rather refreshing. You must remember that the child has never seen anyone."

"I think she is very uninteresting," said Mrs. Stanley, by way of winding up the discussion; and as Mrs. Hope was stirring the fire she made no reply.

Mr. Callander was coming round the corner of the house when Vida drew near the front-door. At first he did not know

her in her unusual apparel, and was about to beat a retreat, but, on a second glance, he discovered who it was, and advanced slowly, with a countenance of consternation.

"Vida," he said, half sharply, half peevishly, "what piece of nonsense is this? Where have you been?"

"I have been to The Mains," replied his daughter.

"What was your business there?"

"To see the ladies. They called here, and I called back."

Vida did not say Nannie had sent her. This fault-finding tone of her father's made her perversely inclined to take all the responsibility of what she had done, and to stand by it.

"What have you got on?" continued her father.

"Some clothes that used to be mamma's,"

said Vida, knowing that that name would bring some softening into the stern countenance, as it did.

"Well," he said, in another tone, and more to himself, "she never looked like that."

For a moment Vida felt inclined to take his hand, and draw it round her neck, and talk to him about her mother; but the next words he spoke were hard and dry, and kept her at the old distance.

"You did very wrong, Vida, to take any such step without my knowledge. Why did you not consult me?"

"Because you don't care for things like that. It would only bother you," said Vida, with simple truthfulness.

"What put all this into your head?"

"It is polite," said Vida, reproducing Nannie's lesson with great coolness. "When

one lady calls on another, the other should always call back. If I did not go they would think it was very bad manners."

"When one lady calls on another!" he repeated in vexation. "You seem to think yourself as good as they are."

"I think I am," said Vida, without hesitation. "Of course I am not so old, but that doesn't matter. I daresay they would like to be younger too, if they could."

"Vida," said Mr. Callander, with dignity, "I cannot listen any longer to these flippant remarks. You seem to be wholly ignorant of the respect that is due to your superiors, both in age and position. The family at The Mains are people of distinction."

"Yes, papa, I think they are," said Vida readily, "and so I wanted to be polite to them."

"Instead of that," said her father sternly, "it seems to me that you have taken an unpardonable liberty, and in your rash and thoughtless ignorance it is impossible to say what mistakes you may have made. I must take some opportunity of apologising to the ladies."

Vida made no reply to this, but entered the house, and mounted the little staircase with as much dignified slowness as she was capable of, and closing the door of her little room behind her, began quietly to take off her things. Perhaps the white lace veil, as she threw it on the bed, carried away one or two tears with it, but if so there were none left behind, and except a certain unusual uprightness of the little figure, there was no sign that she felt herself ill-used. For she knew that Nannie would follow her upstairs, and was not surprised

when, a few moments after, she entered the room without knock or announcement.

"Weel, hoo did ye come on?" she inquired, somewhat breathless after climbing the stairs.

"Very well," said Vida; she must not spoil Nannie's pleasure at the success of her expedition by telling her how it had ended; and she had besides a sense of childish dignity which prevented her complaining of her father to the old servant.

"What did they say to ye?"

"Mrs. Hope said she was glad to see me, and I must come again."

"I was sure they wad be pleased wi' the ceveelity. Hoo did you like them?"

"I liked Mrs. Hope; but Mrs. Stanley is rude. I don't think she is a real lady."

"No a rael leddy? peety me, bairn, what can she be but a leddy? Willie

Wishart was here wi' the coals, jist efter ye gaed, and he was tellin' me mair aboot them. They have a terrible gran' hoose in London, and servants by the dizzin."

"And this Mrs. Stanley's husband was some parteekler body, but I canna mind what she ca'ed him; something about drāgons, but it's gane oot o' my heed. And the leddy's-maid tellt Mairn Millar that at hame they have twa men aye stannin' at the front-door, no' to dae onything, but jist for the grander o' the thing."

"Poor men, it must be very dull for them," said Vida, interested. "But Mrs. Stanley was rude for all that. She laughed at me two or three times."

"Hoots, bairn, ye maun been sayin' somethin' fulish," suggested Nannie.

"I don't think so," said Vida slowly,

"but even if I did, she should not have laughed till after I went away."

"But, Viday," said Nannie seriously, "ye manna heed a wee thing like that. Bairns suld aye hae a gude word, and a blythe look for a'body, and no fash themsels ower muckle aboot whether they're respeckit or no." Nannie's tone was unconsciously serious, and the words sounded, as they often did from her, very like a reproof. At another time Vida would have thought nothing of it, but to-day it was more than she could bear. It seemed to her that there was nothing for her but reproof; nothing but making mistakes, and being corrected; doing her best, and finding herself, after all, in disgrace.

Nannie was satisfied with her silence, and betook herself downstairs, and then

Vida's sturdy little heart gave way in unrestrained tears. Oh, for someone to wipe them away, and take her hand, and understand her, and feel sorry for her, just for once, just for once! But no one came. After a short time she rose, and went to her little window, which looked towards the sea. There was something in that calm, deep, shining expanse, that always stilled and quieted her when in trouble; some dim, faint reflection of the great deep peace of the Eternal God. She did not think of that, for the thought of God had no attraction for her. Her father's ministrations in the pulpit had been her only religious teaching, except such instruction as Nannie had given her; and Nannie had that unfortunate habit, which is far too common, of referring to God, and reminding Vida of

His existence, only when she was naughty and troublesome. It had never occurred to her to tell the child, when she was bright and full of childish merriment, that God rejoiced to see her happy; but whenever Vida showed any symptom of lawlessness or disobedience, Nannie did not fail, in an indirect way, to threaten her with the thought of God. Consequently, Vida knew only the negative side of religion; a religion that confines and restrains, not a religion that bestows and enlarges, and impels;—and to have come to *God* for comfort would have been her last thought.

But now Vida could hear that Nannie was carrying the tea-tray into the parlour. She must leave her window and her thoughts, and go down to tea. When she reached the parlour she found her father

already in his place, with a book before him on the tea-table. This was nothing unusual, but to-night Vida felt offended by it as she had never done before. A determination to maintain her dignity took possession of her, and she took down one of her own books from the little shelf as she passed, which she began to study intently, as soon as the two cups of tea were poured out. If her father could take his book and be independent, so could she; if he did not think it worth while to talk, why, neither did she; and she would show him so.

CHAPTER IV.

About a month later, as Vida, returning from an afternoon ramble, approached the little stream that ran past her home, she came suddenly upon the first angler of the season. He was seated on a stone, busy with his rod; a tall, fair-haired lad of fourteen, in gray tourist clothes of a fashionable cut; and the rod, which he was taking to pieces, was new and handsome of its kind, as Vida's practised eye soon perceived. His basket lay beside him, the lid fallen back, and Vida could

see that it was empty. In the surprise of seeing anyone in that secluded spot, Vida's foot missed the first stepping-stone, and though she soon regained her footing, her hat, which, according to her frequent custom, she was carrying in her hand, slipped from her hold, and floated a little way down the stream. The boy sprang up, stretched the fishing-rod into the water, arrested the hat, and returned it to its owner.

Vida said, "Thank you," then paused a moment, and wondered whether she might venture to ask him about his fishing.

"It is too bright to-day," she said, at length, glancing at his basket.

"Is it?" said the boy eagerly.

"Yes. And the water is very clear. You see it has been dry lately."

"Do you think it will rain soon?" asked the boy.

"To-morrow, or next day, it is sure to rain," said Vida, glancing at the sky. Then, somewhat emboldened, she asked, "What sort of flies are you using?"

"These," said the boy, producing them.

"Oh! Those are too large, and too *shiny*," said Vida. "Little brown flies are much better."

"I think I have some here," said the boy, turning over his fishing-book, eagerly.

"You have not fished much," said Vida, gravely, as she watched him.

The boy laughed.

"Never in my life before," he said.

"Never! oh!" said Vida; "if I had been a boy I should have fished *so* much!" and a genuine sigh followed.

"If you had lived all your life in

London, you couldn't," replied the boy pleasantly.

"Are there no streams there?" inquired Vida.

"In London? Oh no, only streets and squares."

"You must have been glad to get away," said Vida, "and come here instead;" at which the boy laughed.

"But I was going to say," continued Vida, "that there is a much better place for fishing a little farther up. I can show you if you like."

"I couldn't think of giving you so much trouble," said the boy, with a politeness to which Vida was quite unaccustomed; but he evidently was not unwilling to be shown.

"It doesn't give me trouble," said Vida, "only I must be home at five."

The boy pulled out a gold watch.

"It is ten minutes to five now," he said.

"We won't have time," said Vida reluctantly. "I could show you another day. Would to-morrow do?"

"Thank you. You are very kind," said the boy. "I *should* like to see it. I could go to-morrow. Would the morning suit you?"

"No," replied Vida bluntly, "I couldn't go in the morning. I always have lessons then. I could go at two o'clock; but perhaps that won't do for you. When do you have dinner?"

"At seven."

"At seven!" exclaimed Vida. "Why, we have *tea* at half-past five."

"Oh, but you know, in the country people always keep early hours," replied the

boy, with ready politeness. "Grandmamma would have liked dinner earlier here, but Aunt Charlotte wouldn't have it."

"Aunt Charlotte," repeated Vida. "Oh —I wonder—I heard Mrs. Hope call Mrs. Stanley, Charlotte."

"Do you know grandmamma?" asked her companion, in surprise.

"Is she your grandmamma?" asked Vida, in turn. "Yes, I know Mrs. Hope. I called on her once." Vida remembered the disagreeable sequel to the call, and broke off abruptly.

"Did you not like her?" asked the boy, observing her expression.

"Oh yes. She was very nice. Do you stay at The Mains?"

"Yes. I only came last night. I live with grandmamma and Aunt Charlotte; my father and mother are dead."

"So is my mother," said Vida, "and I have no brothers or sisters. Have you?"

"No. I never had."

"That's funny. I must go now. Good-bye."

"Stay a moment, please," said the boy. "You have not told me yet where I am to have the pleasure of calling for you to-morrow afternoon—where you live, I mean," he added, seeing Vida look puzzled.

"Oh, you can see the house," said Vida, pointing between the trees, "that brown roof—that's our house."

"And I am to ask for——"

"Vida is my name—Vida Callander. But I'll come and meet you, if it's dry. What is your name?"

"Arthur Kennedy."

They had reached the road by this time. Vida held out her hand to say good-bye.

Her new friend waited to help her over the stile, which unusual help, however, rather impeded her climbing; and then, lifting his broad-brimmed hat, turned in the other direction.

"When that boy grows up," said little Vida to herself, as she ran home, "what a *real* gentleman he will be! When people are polite it makes you feel much older. So different from Mr. Jeffrey and papa talking all night, and never minding me. And what nice clothes! I wish I had curled my hair this morning; it makes me look so much better; but I'll do it to-morrow morning."

"What are ye wantin'?" inquired Nannie that evening, as she observed Vida turning over the newly-ironed collars and shirts, which lay on a tray on the kitchen-dresser.

"I want a clean tucker," said Vida.

"What way?" said Nannie, surprised; "it's no' Setterday yet."

"But I am going out to-morrow after dinner, Nannie;" and with that Vida sat down, and gave the history of the afternoon.

"Weel," said Nannie dryly, "I'm glad to see ye takin' mair tint to your claes, whatever brings it aboot. There's a tucker to ye, and ye can tak' yer best neck-ribbon if ye like. I was jist thinkin' on Sawbath it was turned an awfu' colour, and I wadna let ye pit it on to the kirk again."

A pause followed, after which Nannie inquired quietly, "And what kin' o' laddie was he?"

"Oh, he was very nice," said Vida warmly; "and, Nannie, you never saw anyone so polite."

"There's a heap of folk polite, that has

nae ither raycommendation," said Nannie, who had privately resolved to give no sanction to the acquaintanceship till she had seen and approved of the young gentleman.

Consequently, the next day she kept Vida occupied till it was fully two o'clock, and when the little girl remonstrated, she replied coolly, "Hoots, gin he wants yer company, he may come the length o' The Manse and ca' for you. That's aye the way a gentleman diz."

Mr. Callander was much astonished, on setting out for an afternoon walk, to encounter a stranger at the front-door. He was a tall lad, with a broad straw hat, and he stood with his back to the door, and his fishing-rod resting on the ground, comfortably enjoying the view.

"I called for Miss Callander," he said,

touching his hat, as he turned at the opening of the door. "She lives here, I think?"

"You are, correct," said Mr. Callander, with deep gravity, which, in truth, covered some embarrassment. "She lives here. She is my daughter."

"Miss Callander was kind enough to make an appointment with me for this afternoon," said the lad.

"Oh—ah—yes," replied Mr. Callander; "I will call the servant. Nannie," stepping back into the passage. Nannie presently appeared, upon which Mr. Callander withdrew.

"I called for Miss Callander," said the boy, to Nannie now; "she was to go out with me this afternoon."

"Miss Callander, sir," said Nannie, with much ceremony, "will be obleeged if ye

will step into the parlour a meenit. She'll be doon direckly."

The next minute, Vida, running downstairs in her usual headlong fashion, was much surprised to be accosted by Nannie, when she reached the bottom, with the following sharp whisper: "Can ye no come doon the stair like a young leddy? Did ever onybody hear the like o' yon?"

When she entered the parlour, her first words to her new acquaintance were, "But where is your basket?"

Arthur, who was in the midst of a polite greeting, stopped short, and replied, "I thought it was not worth while to bring it. Very likely we shan't catch anything."

"Perhaps not," said Vida slowly, and knowing that this was probably the sensible view of the matter; "but—but I don't think I could go fishing without a basket

for all that. Oh, I know, there is an old one of Frank's in the kitchen."

She went off, and presently returned with it, and they started. But just as they reached the wood, a carriage came up, with two ladies inside, in whom, as they drew near, they recognised Mrs. Hope and Mrs. Stanley. The horses were pulled up, and Mrs. Stanley addressed her nephew with some displeasure:

"Is this you, Arthur? We could not find you anywhere. I thought I mentioned to you at lunch that we were to call this afternoon upon Mrs. Rotherley?"—a slight elevation of Arthur's eyebrows was his only reply—"did I not?" pursued Mrs. Stanley in an irritated tone.

"Well, Aunt Charlotte, if you had, I could only have said I could not accompany you to-day."

"But I am glad we have met you," continued Mrs. Stanley, endeavouring not to hear; "you can come still. Young Rotherley is staying with his mother and——"

"I have an engagement this afternoon," said Arthur, with a touch of haughty indignation, "and I need not keep this young lady longer standing. Shall we go on, Miss Callander?"

But Mrs. Hope would not let them go thus. She closed sharply the carriage-door, which Mrs. Stanley had opened, and said, decidedly, "Of course you cannot go to-day. Stay a moment, Arthur. How are you, Miss Callander?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Vida gratefully. She had found it rather awkward to stand by in silence.

"So you are going to fish? Well, I hope

Arthur will bring me in enough trout for breakfast. Good afternoon." And the carriage passed on.

"I told you so," said Mrs. Stanley, triumphantly; "Arthur has not been a day in the place before she finds him out, and appropriates him. She is——"

"Charlotte, I am out of all patience with you," said Mrs. Hope (though she looked wonderfully serene); "in the first place, you will not persuade me that that child is anything but simple and artless. And suppose it were otherwise, you have put everything wrong at the outset by proposing to him to treat her rudely. I wonder you never can see things! And I warn you that, if we intend to keep our authority over Arthur, we had better be very careful. I could see all his father in his eyes just now."

Meanwhile, the two children, having crossed the road, were wandering up the side of the little "burn." "Will you tell me one thing?" said Vida, after a long pause.

"What is that?"

"If you are to call me Miss Callander, what ought I to call you? I don't think you are old enough to be called Mr. Kennedy —not *quite* old enough," said Vida, fearing she had given offence. Her face was seriously puzzled. Arthur burst into a merry laugh. Vida drew up her head: "I only ask you," she said, with childish dignity, "because I do not wish to make mistakes. I do not know about these things so well as other girls, because I have no mother."

Something in this grave simple explanation touched the lad. There was something

different here from the vanity, the affectation, and the unreality of the other girls he knew. It roused his sense of chivalry, and he answered the little maiden, with the gravest respect:

"You shall call me what you like. I think Arthur would be best. And, if you like it, I will call you Vida."

"Oh yes," said Vida; "nobody calls me Miss Callander, and I always have to think who you mean. I only have it on my letters. Arthur——"

"Yes."

"Oh nothing. I was only trying how it sounded."

As to the fishing, perhaps the less said about that the better. They whipped the burn vigorously till about six o'clock, and then, at Arthur's suggestion, sat down under a large tree. To tell the truth, he was a

little tired though he said nothing about it. He laid his head back against a stone; and, as he closed his eyes, Vida had leisure to observe how faint was the pink in his cheeks, and how clear the veins in the white forehead.

"Arthur, do you study very hard?" she presently inquired.

"No, indeed; no more than I can help."

"You look rather as if you did."

"I was ill all last winter. I got wet through and had a fever, and I don't feel quite myself yet." He closed his eyes again, and there was a pause.

"Arthur, why don't you study more than you can help?"

"Oh, because—— I don't know. Why should I?"

"My brother Frank used to study very

hard," said Vida. "He had to, you know, because he was to be a minister. Are you going to be a minister?"

"I! Not if I know it," replied Arthur, with a ringing laugh. "I'm going in for the Civil Service. What makes you think of that? Do I look ministerial?"

"No," said Vida, a little abashed; "but—Well, you know, papa is a minister, and so is Frank and Mr. Jeffrey, and I didn't think, somehow, of anybody being anything else."

Arthur hastened to show that he meant no disrespect to the profession.

"I daresay it's a very jolly thing, you know, if you are that sort of person; but—I'm not."

"I don't know if it's very jolly," said Vida doubtfully. "Before Frank was a minister we had such nice times and he

was so funny and merry, but now he's grown just like papa. He walks about so quietly, you know, and doesn't laugh properly now, and his voice is grown different. When I heard him read in his own church the first time, it made me feel as if I was wicked somehow. It made me feel as if children were too foolish, and they should all be put away to make room for good ministers instead."

Arthur surveyed his companion with wide-open eyes. What reply could one make to such conversation as this?

"Well, I never felt like that," he remarked at last. "When our clergyman reads the prayers I always think I could do it as well myself."

"Of course there is one thing—Frank is married now," said Vida meditatively. "I don't think he *could* behave as he

used to do, for Mary wouldn't have it."

"Is she nice?" inquired Arthur.

"Mary? Oh yes." A short sigh followed this; Arthur did not like to press the question, but the explanation followed presently.

"She is very kind to me, you know; but when I go to Campbelton, I always feel as if I hadn't room. The house is all so tidy, and everything stays just in its own place. You don't feel like sitting on the bed, or bringing up a chair for your feet."

Arthur was listening comfortably, and made no reply. Vida continued:

"And when you go to walk you can *only* walk, and you must keep on your gloves; and Mary herself is just the same—I mean in her mind, you know."

"Has she any children?" asked Arthur drowsily.

"Yes, she has a little boy, five months old."

"I should think *he* would upset the house for them."

"No; I'm afraid not," said Vida readily. "I've thought of that, but Nannie says babies don't even walk till they're a year old. I daresay he will be two before he can upset anything, and I'm sure, long before that, Mary will teach him that he shouldn't. Arthur, you must be tired talking about this."

"Not the least, but it must be late. Ten minutes to seven. Oh Vida, I quite forgot you should have been home by five."

"No," said Vida comfortably. "I told Nannie I wouldn't be home to tea if we were getting fish."

"Well," said Arthur, laughing, "according to that you should have been home."

"Oh, but then," said Vida, rising, "I meant getting fish or having nice times. What shall we do to-morrow, Arthur?"

Arthur had his own doubts as to whether he should find it possible to-morrow to escape from domestic ties, but he only said: "What would you like to do?"

"It would be nice to go along the shore."

"Then I'll call for you about two to-morrow, if I can."

"The Civil Service," said Vida to herself, as she ran home. "I thought Civil meant polite; if it does, I'm sure it will be just the thing for Arthur."

CHAPTER V.

"WHAUR are ye gaun?" inquired Nannie the next day, as she met Vida bounding upstairs.

"I'm going to put on my brown dress."

"What way that? Yer print was clean on this mornin'."

"Because," said Vida, "Arthur Kennedy is coming for me to have a walk on the shore, and I want to look nice."

"Aweel, ye can wait till he comes," said Nannie dryly.

"No, Nannie, I can't. I don't like to

run away and change my dress when I see a person coming. It's not ladylike."

"Leddylike? I never heard tell o' *you* settin' up to be leddylike afore. Weel, Viday, if ye tear yer broon frock on the rocks ye'll mend it yersel' afore Sawbath."

"Oh yes, Nannie, of course," said Vida, disappearing.

"There's nae 'of course' aboot it. It'll be the first time ever ye had a goon atween *yere* fingers, aither to mak' or men'."

But Vida's brown dress was put on in vain that afternoon. Arthur had found, on reaching home the night before, that Mrs. Hope and Mrs. Stanley had brought young Rotherley back with them, for a two-days' visit. There was no escape for him next morning; he was obliged to yield to necessity, and accompany his friend to the top of Goat Fell. This exertion, how-

ever, proved too severe for his strength, and brought on a slight attack of feverishness and fatigue, which confined him to the house for a few days. As soon as he was able, he penned and despatched the following note:

"DEAR VIDA,

"I should have written on Wednesday morning, but I quite forgot before we started to say that I could not walk with you, as Tom Rotherley was here, and had to go to the top of Goat Fell. We found that it was farther than we expected, but had a fine view; and I am getting all right now, and shall be down to see you soon.

"Your affectionate Friend,

"ARTHUR KENNEDY."

On Friday morning Mr. Callander, seeing

a man-servant from the window, not unnaturally asked what he had brought.

"A note for Miss Callander," said Nannie, surveying the address, and then transferring her attention to the crest on the back.

"I'll take it to her," said Mr. Callander, solemnly receiving the note. He was on the way to his study, where his daughter was awaiting him, for it was the hour for lessons. "This note is for you, Vida," he said; and then waited in silence for an explanation.

Vida took her time to read it, which was indeed necessary, for she rarely had a letter to read; but her father had become somewhat impatient before she said, as if just recollecting his presence:

"Oh, it is from Arthur Kennedy, to say why he could not walk with me on Wednesday, because he had a friend with

him, and they went up Goat Fell, and he seems to have been tired; but he says he is better now, and will come some day soon instead."

"I do not feel quite certain," said Mr. Callander slowly, "that you ought to walk about with Arthur Kennedy, Vida."

Vida looked up in frank and blank surprise.

"I mean," said Mr. Callander, wondering why he could not prevent his eyes from falling, when Vida's were so steadily raised, "I'm not sure that it is quite the thing to do."

Fortunately Vida caught no glimmering of his meaning.

"I don't think Arthur would do it unless it was the thing to do," she said innocently. "He has no brothers, or sisters either, and that is why we like one another."

Mr. Callander thought he would mention

the matter to Nannie. So the next morning, when she was in the room after breakfast, he began, uneasily: "Nannie, I wish to consult you. Do you think it is quite the thing for Vida to walk about with this lad, this Arthur Kennedy?"

"Weel, sir, I see nae hairm aboot the lad," said Nannie, collecting the spoons and forks. "He's wise, and douce-like abune his years, and I jalouse he's been weel broucht up."

"I think it would be just as well that Vida kept to herself," said Mr. Callander, still fidgeting.

"Peety me, sir," said Nannie, "what wad ye expec' but that the twa bairns wad foregather? A bairn by itsel's like the tae half o' the scissors wantin' the tither. The puir lassie's had mony a lanesome day, and when she has fand

somebody to neiber her, it wad be unco sair upon her if aither you or me, sir, was to stan' i' the way."

"But these peòple," said Mr. Callander half peevishly, "these are evidently people of position, and I should not like the idea of our forcing——"

"And gin they be," replied Nannie, with some heat, "gin they be in ony position ye like, a' I can say is, that they're a' the mair shootable for Viday to ken. My mistress's dochter needna hing her heed afore onybody. And for Viday, though she's gey wilfu', and tak's little thought, and though I canna gar her fauld her claes, and her sampler's nae farrer on than it was at Christmas—she can come forrit, and tak' her place wi' the best o' them. I'll say that for her, though I wadna feel mysel' free to say't *till* her."

"Well, well," said Mr. Callander—then, after a short pause, "is the paper come yet?"

A few days later the subject was also discussed at The Mains. The evening before Vida had made one of her grave calls, this time entirely on her own responsibility, and the two ladies were talking it over.

"The coolness of the little minx!" exclaimed Mrs. Stanley. "To think of her sitting there so quietly, and asking with such dignity, 'And is Arthur better?' I believe he caught cold the day he went fishing with her."

"Well, Charlotte, I don't," replied Mrs. Hope quietly; "and I believe her coolness is only the frankness of perfect simplicity."

"But if she *is* simple," said Mrs. Stanley, giving way a little to gain an advantage, "that will not prevent Arthur getting

entangled with her. I forgot to tell you that on Friday morning he sent Richards down to the house with a note, which I'm certain was to explain why he had not seen her the last day or two, and to tell her she might expect him down shortly. Now," continued Mrs. Stanley, "you see how it is. Boys are such fools. Suppose Arthur were to marry someone beneath him, like this girl——"

"Marry!" ejaculated Mrs. Hope, in amazement. "Arthur marry! The boy was only fourteen last November! The fact is, Charlotte, you have so much prudence, and calculation, and foresight, that you go beyond everything, and make yourself perfectly ridiculous. Arthur *marry!*"

"There is no harm in looking forward," said Mrs. Stanley sullenly. "He will

marry some time; I don't see anything to laugh at in my talking about it; and you know quite well that if he did marry beneath him, you would be just as vexed as I should. Your ideas about him are just the same as mine, and I can't understand why you are so careless about this nonsense, and why you don't put a stop to it. Even supposing my fears are groundless, there can be no *harm* in putting a stop to it."

Mrs. Hope paused; there was some justice in what her daughter said; it was true that her views were ambitious and worldly; she intended for her grandson that he should possess every distinction and advantage, that he should move in the best society, and make a brilliant marriage; why then did she not, as Mrs. Stanley suggested, err on the safe side?

"Well, Charlotte," she said at length, "I feel as if the boy had a right to another year or two of freedom and childish enjoyment, before he becomes a man of the world, as we hope to make him. As to your silly notions, they are too absurd to be discussed; if he wishes to make friends with the little rustic, why I see no reason for refusing to indulge him, especially as I believe he will be better in health for having a companion. "And besides," added Mrs. Hope, with a smile, "you may feel amused at me, but I hardly think I have courage to look the said little rustic in the face, with those clear brown eyes fixed upon mine, and tell her that we have decided to see no more of her."

"There is no need for that," broke in Mrs. Stanley. "You have only to mention the matter to Arthur, or, let *me* speak to him; I will do it if you wish."

"Oh no, thank you," said Mrs. Hope, closing the conversation with her light laugh. "You know I am not fond of entrusting business to you; it is not always satisfactory."

So the friendship, thus doubly threatened, was allowed to continue; and a great pleasure it became to both the children. Vida enjoyed her rambles wonderfully that summer, for what is pleasanter than to act the guide on a favourite walk, for the benefit of a new and admiring companion? It never occurred to her that Arthur might weary of these walks; she took for granted that the scenery of her island home must charm and interest him, as it did her. And Arthur never did weary; he was greatly changed, though that Vida did not know. Had she seen him a few weeks before she would hardly have believed him to be the same boy.

Owing partly to somewhat delicate health and partly to the domestic circumstances by which he was surrounded, Arthur had all his life exhibited at home a languid indifference, which sometimes displeased and sometimes pained his grandmother. Nothing seemed to amuse him; he was always polite, generally affectionate, but rarely interested or enthusiastic. Travelling—sightseeing—he did not seem to enjoy; if friends were invited to the house he disappeared as soon as he could to his own room, where he might generally be found on his back on the sofa, lazily sketching. This was his one amusement; books he did not care for.

Mrs. Hope regarded him with anxiety, of which he took advantage, whenever it suited him, to gain his own way. His tutor tried to flatter him, and never required

him to study except when he felt inclined. Arthur had a thorough contempt for the flattery, but did not fail to avail himself of the liberty afforded. His aunt, Mrs. Stanley, endeavoured to control him; but as she had never gained his affection, and her efforts at training were both injudicious and tyrannical, Arthur kept quietly aloof and withstood her when he thought it worth while.

Then the atmosphere of his home was entirely artificial; and a child cannot live long in such an atmosphere without seeing through its falsehood and tiring of it. The life around him was founded on unreality; the objects he saw aimed at were unworthy, the means used to attain them contemptible. That which his friends regarded as happiness — position, dignity, influence in the fashionable world—appeared to him imagi-

nary and unsatisfactory ; and yet the habits of indolence and self-indulgence were settling so steadily upon his mind that it seemed more and more unlikely that he would ever rouse himself to reach any worthier goal. He was much to be pitied.

But now all was different. He was brought face to face with Nature ; not the grassy swards and smooth hill-lines of the south, but Nature in her grander forms, where she breaks into crag and corrie and lonely stream. And her priestess was this little girl, with rosy face and sun-browned hands. Not a woman in miniature, as he had believed all girls to be ; but a real child, who could bound across the brook and beat him at a race, or help him over a gate ; a child who said what she was thinking, and listened with unaffected interest, and laughed without considering

how it sounded. And in that grand country, where the hills rose behind and the waves broke beneath, in the sweet natural freshness of little Vida's companionship and under the softening influence of her innocent sympathy, his child-heart awoke to claim its own inheritance of fun and frolic. He began to feel that he was a boy, and that the bright world lay open before him; every day was a fresh spring of happiness. His step became elastic, his voice eager; he grew mischievous, to the disgust of Mrs. Stanley, and *hungry*, to the delight of Mrs. Hope.

As for Vida, she knew of no change in Arthur, except that she thought he had grown stronger; but she knew that *her* world had opened wonderfully since he came. Had he not solved all her old difficulties about the House of Commons,

and the Army and Navy? And did he not tell her all about London that he could think of, faithfully recalling for her pleasure the various sights which he had seen so often and cared for so little?

"I should like to go there better than anything," said Vida one day.

"I don't know that you would. It is not so nice as you think—nothing like this. You will never find any place like this wherever you go." Arthur glanced round as he spoke. It was a lovely July afternoon, and they were sitting on the top of the low ridge that overlooked The Manse.

"No, I know that," said Vida readily. "But you know, Arthur, it is not always like this here. Sometimes, last winter, when it was wet for two or three weeks, and the wind kept roaring outside, and the sea was so gray, I used to think it was rather dull."

Vida spoke cautiously, as if this were something like treason.

"I daresay," said Arthur; "but we have rain in London too, and sometimes terrible fogs as well. Only you could amuse yourself there every evening, if you liked. You could go to plays, or concerts, or operas."

"Or you might read," suggested Vida, "if you had a nice book. Are there many books in London?"

"Books? Oh yes; millions and millions of them."

"I wish I had every one of them," said Vida emphatically.

"Why, Vida, what would you do with them? Would you read them?"

"Yes, I would. I do like reading—don't you?"

"I don't know," said Arthur candidly.

"I never tried it much, except my lesson-books, and of course *they* are horrid."

"I don't think that," observed Vida. "I like some of my lesson-books very well."

"What lesson-books do you have, Vida?"

"I have Virgil now, and he is *splendid*," replied Vida, with enthusiasm.

Arthur was taken aback. "You have Virgil? Why, Vida, I don't; I have only Cæsar."

"I had Cæsar last winter; he is very nice too," said Vida critically.

"Perhaps he is, if you could be bothered looking out the words. But, Vida, aren't you only twelve?"

"No, I am nearly thirteen," said Vida, raising her head.

"Well, you must be a very clever girl."

"I don't know if I am," said Vida inno-

cently. "I don't know any other girl, so I don't know if I am clever or not."

"Well, here's one thing; either you must be very clever, or I must be very stupid." Both laughed at that, and a pause followed.

"But, Arthur," said Vida slowly, "I don't think a man can be *much* good if he never reads *anything*."

"Don't suppose he can," answered Arthur.

"And, Arthur, won't you be rich after you grow up?"

"Expect I will," said Arthur, aiming a small stone at the kitchen-chimney of The Manse; "not *very* rich, but well enough."

"But you'll be—a kind of great person, won't you? You won't be just a *common* man, you know?"

"No," said Arthur. "Grandmamma says I have some of the best blood in England

in my veins. I don't know anything about it;" and another stone followed the first in the direction of the chimney.

"Arthur, don't; that might break the lid of the teapot down below. Well, I think," said Vida decidedly, "if you are a person like that, it would be a great pity to grow up stupid."

Arthur was rather impressed. "Do you think I am stupid?" he said in surprise.

"No, indeed," said Vida warmly, "you are the cleverest boy I know"—(which, however, was not saying much)—"but that mightn't be enough, you know, after you're grown up. Perhaps you had better study a little, Arthur."

"Grandmamma says, in a year or so, I shall go to Harrow," said Arthur. "I suppose they'll make me study there."

"What is Harrow?" asked Vida.

"It's a large boys' school. Tom Rotherley goes there, and he says it is jolly; but if they're all like him I don't think much of them."

Arthur felt, somehow, a little out of temper at this friendly caution, "not to grow up stupid." The unpleasant possibility of "growing up stupid" had never occurred to him before. He had always had an undefined idea that, if he had independent means, and a good position, he might dispense with learning; but Vida seemed to see, in his possessing these, only an additional reason for his improving himself; indeed she had almost intimated that, if he did not rouse himself to exertion, he might become, in his circumstances, an object of ridicule. He digested this as he went home.

That evening, after dinner, Mrs. Hope was

surprised by her grandson's saying to her: "Grandmamma, I should like to have another tutor as soon as we go home, and get rid of Maurice."

"Why, my dear? I thought you got on very well with him."

"He's very little good. I don't think he has taught me one thing since Christmas. Of course I did not wish to learn, but when he saw that he should have been all the more strict."

"I charged him specially not to require too much of you," said Mrs. Hope, "on account of your health."

"But, grandmamma, there is a difference between not requiring too much, and requiring nothing at all."

"That is quite true."

"You don't know how far back I am," continued Arthur; "I believe I am no

better than a dunce, and, if I go to Harrow, you wouldn't like me to disgrace you."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Hope, marvelling greatly at this unexpected exhibition of humility and common sense.

"Do you remember that fellow, Tulloch, the Scotchman, that Walter Stanley had last winter? Do you think I could get him?"

"I'm sure I don't know, dear," said Mrs. Hope, "but we shall see when we get home. But you know, Arthur, that Mr. Tulloch was a little uncouth in his manners, not nearly so refined as Mr. Maurice, and his accent was very broad."

"That doesn't matter a bit, grandmamma, if he will only get me on with my books. I don't intend to adopt his accent, and I don't need to learn manners."

"Well, dear; do as you think best. I am willing to make the change."

"I never saw anyone so improved," said Mrs. Hope, looking affectionately after her grandson as he left the room, "in *every* way. He begins to take an interest in everything—even his lessons. Did you hear what he said? He wishes to have another tutor instead of Mr. Maurice, because, he says, he does not give him enough to do!"

"Mr. Maurice would give him more to do if he could get him to do it," observed Mrs. Stanley with some truth.

"I only hope he won't overwork himself," said Mrs. Hope fondly. "But his health is quite re-established. His appetite is *so* improved, and he has grown so lively, so merry, and companionable. This air has done him all the good in the world."

"His health is better," replied Mrs. Stanley, "but I can't say I see the great improvement otherwise. His complexion was more refined before he got sunburnt, and I always did think him so gentlemanly when he put on that bored look!"

CHAPTER VI.

"WHERE are you going, Vida?" cried Arthur, one afternoon from behind. He had observed her at some distance before him on the road, and now overtook her on the little bridge.

"To Carrachan," said Vida. Carrachan was the nearest village.

"May I go with you?"

"Oh yes," said Vida joyfully, "if you don't want to do something else."

"I've nothing else to do. It isn't lively at our house to-day. Grandmamma

isn't very well, and the cook has left in a hurry, and Aunt Charlotte is rather—depressed. Give me your basket, Vida. What do you want at Carrachan?"

"We want some things. Frank and Mary and the baby came last night. We didn't expect them so soon, so we want some things—for eating, you know; coffee, and eggs, and rice, and a ham."

"I thought they had come. I saw a gig driving to your house last night, when we were at dinner."

"We didn't expect them till Monday," said Vida, "but someone took fever, and Mary thought she had better come away at once, because of the baby."

"And what do you think of your nephew?" asked Arthur.

"I think he will be very nice when he gets a little older," said Vida. "I dare-

say he is very nice now, but Mary won't let me take him, and you don't like a baby so well when you can't have him yourself. I meant to nurse him *so* much." And Vida sighed.

"How long are they going to stay?" inquired Arthur.

"I think they will stay a month," said Vida, rather seriously.

"You don't seem very much delighted."

"Well, I will tell you, Arthur. I like them to come, for I suppose it does them good; but whenever Mary comes, she always begins to tell me about my faults and bad manners. She says she thinks it her duty, because I have no mother; but *I* think it's rather awkward, in your own house, when your visitors tell you how you should behave. And she calls me Davida, and no one else does. Isn't it a shame?"

"*What* is a shame? That no one else calls you Davida? I'm sure I shall be delighted——"

"Arthur, don't. Well, if I cared much for Mary, I wouldn't mind; but if you don't care for a person, you don't like it."

"That's quite true," said Arthur. "I shouldn't mind grandmamma scolding me a whole day, but I wouldn't stand two minutes of it from Aunt Charlotte."

At length they reached the village shop, and Vida began to transact her business, which she did with the mingled dignity and simplicity that was natural to her. Presently there seemed to be some difficulty, and Arthur drew near. It was the ham that was under discussion.

"The cairt's just awa'," the man was saying. "I canna send it afore the morn's mornin'."

"He can't send it to-night," said Vida, interpreting.

"Won't it do to-morrow?" inquired Arthur.

"I don't think it will. Nannie said she must boil it to-night. I don't know whether it could be boiled to-morrow." Vida looked perplexed.

"Let us take it now," said Arthur; "that will be the best way."

"It's a so-lid weicht, sir," said the man, "and it's a lang road."

"We will take it," said Arthur, rather shortly. "Be good enough to wrap it up."

Vida had said nothing. She was not sure that it was fair to allow Arthur to carry it, but it *would* certainly be a comfort not to disappoint Nannie. So they started on the homeward journey, she carrying the basket, and Arthur the ham. It was questionable

whether he had ever carried anything really heavy before.

"I wish to ask what you think," said Vida, "about this. We are to have Miss Starforth and Mr. Jeffrey to tea to-morrow night, because Frank and Mary are here; and I want to know if you think I should ask you."

"Well," said Arthur, with gravity, "I rather think you ought."

"*I* think so," said Vida, "but Nannie was not sure. You see I have been at your house" (Arthur had brought her in once to lunch, during a heavy shower), "and, I think, it would only be polite."

"I think so too," said Arthur, in a tone of conviction.

"Very well then, I will. But, Arthur, we have tea at half-past five. What will you do about dinner?"

how anyone can live, and not care more for things than she does. Is she always like that?"

"Oh no, there are plenty of things she cares for at home."

"What?" asked Vida.

"Well, she likes to have the best silver plate in the terrace, and the best pair of greys in the park. And she likes to bow to all the people that are above her, and to have them pay her attention; and to cut all the people that are a little beneath her, and make them feel uncomfortable. But there are no great people here, so she doesn't like the place."

"Great people, Arthur," said Vida, "what is it makes people great? Is it because they are clever?"

"Clever? Not a bit of it. They're great duffers, a lot of them."

"Then have they done something particular?"

"They have never done anything, most of them, since they were born. You see, Vida, if they required to *do* anything, they would only be common people."

"Then why are they great?" asked Vida.

"Well, they come of good families, you know."

"But families are often mixed—some good and some bad."

"No, no, Vida. I mean families that go a long way back."

"Everybody's family goes a good way back, don't they?" said Vida doubtfully.

"No; but don't you see, Vida? I mean when people can count a long way back, and all their ancestors are noble."

"But how could that make them great?" Vida was still puzzled. "They *themselves*

might be quite different, you know. If you were stupid, or bad, or useless yourself, it would do you no good to have had great ancestors; it might only make you more ashamed."

"People don't look at it that way, Vida," said Arthur impatiently. "That is all very well; but if you come of a good family it gives you a good position, and everyone wants to make friends with you."

"I wouldn't," said Vida, with warmth; "I would make friends with people for themselves, and not for their ancestors."

"Not if you were in London."

"It would make no difference, being in London. I would be just the same there as I am here."

"That you would *not*," replied Arthur emphatically.

"Arthur," said Vida, as if a new idea

had occurred to her, "*you* don't care anything about this—about good families—do you?"

"Well, I rather do," replied Arthur. "I think it is a very nice thing to be able to trace your descent away back to someone who fought in the Battle of Hastings."

"Well, perhaps," said Vida slowly, rather taken with this picturesque aspect of the subject, "if he fought *well*."

Arthur certainly never had seen such a tea-table as he saw at The Manse the next evening. The "cream" scones, and the "boiled" scones, and the "dropped" scones, who shall describe them? And to the uninitiated what will description avail? He recognised the ham in a comfortable boiled and garnished condition, at one side. Then

there were the fowls at the end, and the boiled eggs peeping out, round and brown, from under their white napkin; and the butter and the cheese, and the three kinds of preserves and the fresh oat-cake, not to speak of the plums on the side-table. As they sat down, Arthur noticed that there seemed to be a polite dispute between Vida and her sister-in-law as to who should pour out the tea; and when Vida closed it by sitting down at the tea-tray, he thought he could see a glimmer of satisfaction in Nannie's somewhat grim countenance. Then he amused himself by watching Vida's business-like handling of the cups and saucers, and her dignified manner of inquiring which of her guests took sugar. Vida looked well, he thought. She wore a fresh white frock and black velvet sash, and her brown curls were smoother than

he was generally accustomed to see them. Then he observed that Mr. Jeffrey was looking at her too, and wondered, for a moment, what interest this grave, quiet, elderly-looking man could have in a child like Vida. But he was being addressed.

"Have you been long here?" asked Mr. Jeffrey pleasantly, from the other side of the table.

"I have been—about two months and a half," replied Arthur, rather surprised to think how long it was.

"Do you remain through next month?"

"No, I believe we return home next week."

"Ah!" said Mr. Jeffrey, with a quiet smile, "it is a mistake not to stay on for the first week or two of September: *that* is the month to see Arran in its glory; is it not, Vida?"

"I don't know," said Vida; "it is very nice itself, but then you are always remembering that there is nothing to come after, except winter. But if you go next week, Arthur, you'll miss the nutting."

"A more substantial loss," suggested her brother Frank; "Vida would not give you her bag of nuts for a month of sunsets."

"Frank wouldn't *like* me to give them," said Vida, "for he always carries off more than the half."

"Miss Vida," said Mr. Jeffrey—he was sitting next her—"do you remember a promise you made me last autumn?"

"No, I don't," answered Vida promptly.

"You promised to take me for a day's nutting next year."

"Did I? I had forgotten," said Vida half absently. She was wishing Arthur could have gone with her. Then rousing

herself: "Would you care for it, Mr. Jeffrey?"

"Care for it? I have been looking forward to it all winter."

"That must be a joke," Vida supposed; but she answered: "Then I will," with a gracious little bow.

"You won't forget again," said Mr. Jeffrey, with his usual smile, half sad, half sweet.

"Oh no; or, if I do," said Vida, recollecting it was still a month to the time, "you can remind me some time when you are here."

When they all went out to the shore after tea, Mr. Jeffrey drew up to Arthur. He was attracted by the boy's bright handsome face, and, in that quiet neighbourhood it was a pleasant variety even to hear a new voice.

They entered into conversation, which at length turned upon Arthur's prospects.

"I am going to India," said Arthur. "I have fancied India all my life. My friends don't care about it, but I have made up my mind."

"On what grounds?" asked Mr. Jeffrey pleasantly.

Arthur hesitated a moment.

"Well, I don't see anything else I care to do. I hate London; I couldn't live all my life there."

"You look for more freedom, more scope in India?"

Arthur laughed candidly.

"I don't know that I can say exactly *what* I look for. I *must* leave home, somehow, and my father gained some distinction in India. That gives me a chance of a good appointment. I *might* do some good my-

self, though I doubt that; but at any rate I should have a glorious time of it, and get rid of the wretched restraint of life at home."

"Ah!" said Mr. Jeffrey meditatively. "How happy we could be in a number of places, if we could only leave ourselves behind us!"

The exclamation was so genuinely earnest that Arthur looked up in surprise. The idea half struck him that such a remark was improper in a minister, who ought, in virtue of his office, to be content with all existing dispensations, himself included.

"You are wondering at me," said Mr. Jeffrey, answering his look. "You have never known what it is to be weary of yourself; to feel certain powers within you; to have great plans and good hopes; and to find everything frustrated again and again by this same miserable interfering self."

He wondered at his own freedom as he spoke. It was not his way to offer such confidences to anyone. But it is noticeable that a man of habitual reserve will sometimes speak with strange openness to an utter stranger, if that stranger display easy self-confidence and good, but not deep feeling. Besides, Arthur was but a boy, and could hardly understand him sufficiently to criticise. As for Arthur, he did not know what to reply; he was not accustomed to hear people speak with real feeling, and it put him out a little. He waited till Mr. Jeffrey spoke again. "You will know what it is some day—and yet I hope you will not. I think it may be easier for you than for—some people—to take your stand upon the manhood within you, and to hold your own in a high, broad, emphatic sense. But here comes Vida to call us in." A diversion

Arthur was not sorry for, though he confided to Vida, later in the evening, that he thought, "for a minister, that Mr. Jeffrey was a nice man."

About a fortnight after this evening at The Manse, Arthur and his friends returned to London.

We may all have observed in ourselves an inclination, when a friend of whom we have seen a great deal is separated from us, to recount the history of the pleasant time that is past to some *other* friend less intimate, whose pleasure, perhaps, we do not consult in the matter so much as our own. It must have been this impulse that led Vida, when she and Mr. Jeffrey went for their day's nutting shortly after Arthur had left, to favour him with more conversation than she had ever done before. Mr. Jeffrey

was at first delighted with her lively chatter and merry laugh; but, as the time passed on, a feeling crept over him of being "left out in the cold."

"And do you know what Arthur and I have promised?" said Vida, at length. "I have promised to be Arthur's sister, and he has promised to be my brother. And it is to be always, even after we are grown up, you know."

"Even after you are grown up?" repeated Mr. Jeffrey quietly.

"And it is just what I wanted, for I used to be so lonely," said Vida, "and Arthur was alone too, you know; and he will come back next summer, he says; but it is a long time till then." A sigh ended the sentence.

"Vida," said Mr. Jeffrey, "I wish I were a boy now, so that you might play with me,

and I would try to amuse you for a little, till Arthur comes back. How pleasant it would be! I had no companion either, Vida. I was a lonely child too."

"And did you ever find anyone?" asked Vida.

"Not anyone I cared about; only, long afterwards, when I saw you, I thought—well, I thought, 'I could have played with that little girl, if she and I had been children together.'"

Vida laughed at this odd notion.

"But, Mr. Jeffrey," she said, "if you had been young enough to play with me, you wouldn't have been old enough to be a friend for papa; you couldn't do both, you know."

"No; I couldn't do both, I suppose," said Mr. Jeffrey slowly; but, in his heart, he sighed, and wished he could.

"Nannie," said Vida, when she got home that evening; "Mr. Jeffrey was so funny to-day; do you know what he said? He said, he wished he was a boy, that he might play with me!"

Nannie looked up, but she did not join in Vida's laugh, and Vida thought the expression of her face a little peculiar.

CHAPTER VII.

Arthur found that his intention of returning to Arran the next summer was not to be carried out without difficulty. Neither of the ladies approved of the suggestion; indeed, Mrs. Stanley remarked plainly, that "she for one should do nothing of the sort." Arthur next began to argue the matter with his grandmother alone; here he knew that it was only a matter of time; but the siege, on this occasion, lasted longer than usual, and the spring was well advanced before she yielded to his plan, provided his aunt should consent. With his aunt he did not discuss the matter,

but simply remarked, that "the majority" had fixed upon Arran as their summer quarters, and proceeded, amid her disdainful silence, to write to The Mains. The answer returned, however, was that The Mains was already let.

"I daresay we could get one of the fishermen's cottages," said Arthur.

But this was too much.

"What do you mean, Arthur?" exclaimed Mrs. Hope. "One of those miserable hovels, with bedrooms in the rafters? How can you dream of such a thing?"

Arthur saw this would not do.

"There is a very fair hotel at Carrachan," he remarked next. Upon this a long discussion ensued, which ended in the arrange ment that they should take rooms for a fortnight at the hotel.

"Now, mamma," said Mrs. Stanley, breaking

silence for the first time, after Arthur had left the room, "I should just like you to tell me what made you do that? You care no more for Arran than I do; and it is perfectly absurd that you should be dragged away to stay at that common hotel on the roadside, to humour the whim of that boy. I shall not go, as I said."

"If Arthur is going to Arran," said Mrs. Hope quietly, "I prefer that I should go with him."

"If you had simply refused to consider it at all, he would have given it up," said Mrs. Stanley.

"You are quite mistaken, Charlotte," said Mrs. Hope, more warmly; "you do not understand Arthur in the least. If I had refused to go, he would have gone alone. But, independently of that, I think going there did him a world of good last summer.

He has never been so strong in his life as he has been since then. And I think he deserves a little consideration; he has studied very well all the winter. I believe he will do us credit at Harrow, after all. I hardly ever see him now without a book in his hand."

"Yes, a *story*-book," replied Mrs. Stanley, with a short dry laugh; "I believe he has read all the novels in the house this winter. *That* won't help him at Harrow."

"Well, even reading a story-book is something," said Mrs. Hope, a little shaken; "he never used to read at all. And they are not all story-books; he left a volume of Byron on the sofa yesterday."

"It is to be hoped there is a 'Byron class' at Harrow, then," remarked Mrs. Stanley; and her ironical tone did not encourage Mrs. Hope to continue the conversation.

It was a sultry afternoon, early in August, when Mrs. Hope and her grandson, with two servants and a considerable amount of luggage, embarked at Greenock for Carrachan. Arthur, after seeing Mrs. Hope settled in the cabin with as much comfort as the circumstances admitted of, went on deck to look about him. In the course of his stroll he thought he descried, at some little distance, the gray whiskers and shrewd, small, withered features of Mr. Callander. The white neckcloth making him sure that there was no mistake, he turned and walked up to him. When Arthur's cordial greeting fell upon his ear, Mr. Callander seemed to have some difficulty in rousing himself from a reverie, in remembering who the new-comer was, and finally in making an arrangement with his bag and umbrella which should leave his right hand free to be shaken. Arthur,

probably thinking it best to take nothing for granted, began by explaining his identity; which, however, Mr. Callander presently assured him, in his slow way, was unnecessary.

"We were so pleased with Arran, that we have come back," proceeded Arthur. "We could not get The Mains house, so we have taken rooms for a week or two at The Carrachan Hotel. My grandmother is with me."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Callander; then, after a pause, "I trust Mrs. Hope may find herself comfortable; but the hotel changed hands three months ago, and I am given to understand that the management has somewhat deteriorated."

"I am sorry for that," said Arthur, concealing some dismay; "but in summer-lodgings one must not be too particular. I hope your daughter is quite well, sir."

"Yes, Vida is recovered, thank you," replied Mr. Callander. "She has been ill; but that is now a thing of the past."

Other communications followed upon different subjects, till, a shower passing over, the passengers were driven below. Arthur joined his grandmother, while Mr. Callander retreated to a congenially dark and silent corner. The air was still oppressively close as they landed and drove to the hotel.

"Arthur," said Mrs. Hope, as they sat in their own parlour that evening, "that was a miserable dinner, and I don't care for the appearance of this room."

"Neither do I, grandmamma," said Arthur.

Mrs. Hope looked puzzled. "You are sure this is the hotel you intended to come to, Arthur?"

"Oh yes, grandmamma. There is no other."

"I don't understand it. I thought it was a nicer-looking place than this; and I thought the landlady was short and stout. I don't remember that other woman at all."

The look of gentle bewilderment was too much for Arthur. He laughed merrily, and then threw his arm coaxingly round Mrs. Hope.

"I'll explain it to you, grandmamma. I heard, coming down, that the hotel has changed hands; and I'm afraid, from what I heard, that it won't be so comfortable as we expected. I did not know before," he added, eagerly answering the expression of her face; "I only heard it from Mr. Callander on the boat, and by that time it was too late to alter anything."

Mrs. Hope looked quietly dismayed.

"I'm awfully sorry," continued Arthur, in a tone of concern. "If you were not the best and most good-natured grandmother in the world——"

"I am glad your Aunt Charlotte did not come," said Mrs. Hope; the word "good-natured" probably recalling her absent daughter. "And now, what are we to do?"

"Whatever you like, grandmamma. I don't object to anything. I am entirely in your hands after making such a stupid mistake. But don't you think, now we are here, we had better give the place a fair trial—just stay on, and see how we like it, for a few days?"

"The fewer the better," said Mrs. Hope dubiously. "It will not take me many days to find out how *I* like it, Arthur."

"You see, if we have fine weather, we

shall hardly ever be indoors," observed Arthur.

"And the chance of fine weather here is about one in a hundred," rejoined Mrs. Hope. "As this Arran visit is your affair, and not mine, Arthur, you had better tell me at once, what is the shortest stay that will content you?"

"Now, grandmamma, that's business-like. Well, I think a week would be a very fair compromise. You wouldn't like to stay longer than that, and I don't think I could do with less."

Mrs. Hope hesitated. The prospect was more disagreeable to her than Arthur could well imagine; but, after thinking it over, she decided, on various grounds, to make the sacrifice.

"Very well, Arthur, we shall stay for a week," she said, with her usual gracious

gentleness. "But you must understand that any longer would be quite out of the question."

"Oh, certainly, grandmamma; a week will be just the thing. Grandmamma, you are just the right sort of person to get a favour from, for you don't look like a martyr, and make a fellow feel uncomfortable."

"And as long as I don't *look* like a martyr I suppose it won't trouble you much though I should *feel* like one?" inquired Mrs. Hope. She spoke playfully, but a little sadly, for she thought her words touched the truth.

"Yes it would. I'm not half so selfish as you would think, grandmamma. I believe, if I hadn't been so well off, and so lazy, and so—well—fortunate in a grandmother, I might have been a very decent sort of fellow."

It was about noon, the next day, that Arthur left the road, a few miles beyond Carrachan, at the well-remembered stile that led to Mr. Callander's house. He walked along the green pathway, among the low clustering trees, till he reached the open spot where it merged itself in the little gravel walk, in front of the Manse door. As the door was opened to him, Nannie's honest countenance made its appearance, and Arthur changed the inquiry for Vida, which he was just beginning, into a greeting for herself.

"Thank ye, sir," she replied, in answer to his cordial, "How are you, Nannie?" "I'm as weel as an auld body can expec' to be, and better, I daursay, than I'll ever be again. Hoo are ye, yersel', sir?"

"First-rate, thank you."

"Ye're turned an awfu' size," said Nannie,

surveying his tall figure. "If ye hadna spoke the noo, I wadna be that sure I wad hae kent ye."

"How is Miss Vida, Nannie?"

"She hasna been weel a' the spring, but she's quite better noo."

"Can I see her?"

"Eh? No, sir," said Nannie. "She's no at hame the noo."

"Not at home!" repeated Arthur. "Vida not at home!" Why, where should she be? He had been accustomed to regard her as a part of the place, and he felt almost as much taken aback as if he had been told, on bringing out his rod, that the little stream, in which he had fished last summer, was not at home. But Nannie was explaining.

"As I was sayin', sir, she hadna been weel; and whan her brither was here last,

naething wad serve him but he maun tak' her back wi' 'im to Campbelton. But he's to be here again to-morrow week, and she's to come back wi' 'im then."

Rather slowly Arthur turned back along the little path, till he reached the road once more. How long and dreary it looked in the white glare of the sun! And he wondered that he had not noticed before how thick the dust was. Listlessly he moved upwards, till he passed The Mains house, and stood at the head of the hill, but a glance at the long white track among the heather, which now lay before him, proved too discouraging. He turned, and descended again; and, leaving the road where it reached the hollow, began to wander up the bank of the little stream that ran down the wooded hillside into the

valley. This had been a favourite ramble last summer, and, before long, the path led him to an open spot, carpeted with heather, which he and Vida had often used as a resting-place. He threw himself down under the shadow of a rock, and fell into a long fit of musing, and from that into a doze. He did not know how long it was before he became dreamily conscious of footsteps approaching, and half opened his eyes. To his great astonishment, whom should he see, but Vida herself! She came springing towards him, and clapped her hands with a merry laugh, as she seated herself on a tuft of heather opposite his own.

"Vida," said Arthur, only half awake; "you were to come home next week."

She laughed again.

"I knew you would be here," she said. "Nannie told me you had been. I just

came home myself half-an-hour afterwards! Frank found he had to come to-day, and I had been so long away I wanted to get home. When Nannie told me, I thought it was such a good joke that I wouldn't take off my things till I found you. And I've been all over everywhere, and here you are at last, and I am so glad."

If Arthur felt glad he had no words ready to say so. There was a pause, and then he said: "You have not been well, Vida?"

"No," said Vida, shaking her head somewhat gravely, as if that experience had not altogether pleased her.

"What was the matter?"

"I had two colds pretty soon after one another; and then my pulse went fast for awhile; and after that I wasn't very hungry." There was another short pause.

"Get up, Arthur," was Vida's command next; "I want to look at you. Nannie said you had grown so tall." Arthur wondered why he flushed, as he rose to his feet. Vida clapped her hands again as she looked up at him.

"Oh, I am so glad you have grown tall. You see Frank is quite short, and I wanted a tall brother. I wish *I* would grow, too, so that I might be a proper sister for you," concluded Vida regretfully.

"Vida," said Arthur eagerly, "I've got something to say to you about that—about being brother and sister, I mean. But there isn't time now. I must be back at five. I'll tell you another day. I want to have a long talk."

"Very well," said Vida, rising to go down the hill; "I daresay I must go home, too, for I haven't seen papa yet. I forgot

all about him when I heard you were come."

During the next few days Arthur and Vida saw a good deal of one another. Mrs. Hope, having yielded to her grandson's wishes in accompanying him to Arran, had no intention of interfering to prevent his enjoying himself in his own way. She made no objection to his long absences, and received him with her usual gracious smile on his return. He began to have an uneasy consciousness that he was treating his grandmother with but scanty politeness, and to wonder whether she was as well satisfied with him as she seemed to be. These thoughts were in his mind on Sunday afternoon, as he walked down Carrachan village. He and Mrs. Hope had attended church in the morning, and now he was on his way to the

Manse. "One thing I can do," he said to himself; "I will get grandmamma to ask Vida to spend a day. That will make things look better."

As he passed the first bridge he glanced, with a sigh of regret, at the swollen burn which told of heavy rain last night; the sky was cloudy, too, and he was sorry that such a day should be lost to fishing—the first day too, since he had come, that any fish could have been expected to take. But, as he walked on, the wonderful beauty of the freshened earth stole into his heart, and a vague conviction came over him, that there were things worth living for besides fishing. This conviction gained suddenly in clearness and force, when, half-an-hour afterwards, he came upon Vida sitting under a rock on the shore, within sight of the Manse. Her dress bore marks of special Sunday care; her

shoes were shiny, patent-leather ones; she wore her one little gold brooch, enclosing her mamma's hair; her bright curls had a subdued air, as if they had been made to know their places at last; and her head was bent over a book. Arthur stood beside her before she knew.

"What are you reading, Vida?"

"The Bible."

"What do you read that for?"

"I wanted to look up something," said Vida, rather abstractedly, "and I waited till Sunday, because there are so few things one *can* do on Sunday. Arthur——"

"Well?"

"Do you ever think about God?"

"Not often," replied Arthur. "Sometimes I daresay. Oh yes, sometimes."

"Do you think," said Vida, dropping her voice a little, but speaking more earnestly,

"that God is really good, or not? That is what I want to know."

"Oh, well," said Arthur, with the air of one disinterestedly giving an opinion, "yes, I should think so, certainly."

"But do you know the story about Uzzah, Arthur?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, I'll tell you. One time the Ark had to be carried somewhere, and they put it on a cart——"

"I know about the Ark," said Arthur, looking puzzled; "but I don't remember that part."

"Oh, it wasn't the real Ark. It was a little Ark that had to be taken everywhere, and God was very particular about it."

"Yes, I remember now. All right."

"Well, it had to go on a cart, and Uzzah

was driving the cart. Uzzah was quite a good man you know. Well, it was shaking a good deal in the cart, and Uzzah did not like to see it shaking, and he put his hand on it to hold it steady. Before that, God had made a rule that nobody was to touch the Ark but the priests. And just think" —Vida's voice swelled in indignation and sympathy—"only for that—putting his hand on it for a minute to keep it still—God struck him down dead!"

Arthur had listened silently, but when Vida concluded with a vehement, "Wasn't it a shame?" he replied in a startled tone: "Vida, I don't think you ought to say that about things in the Bible. If God does anything, we know it must be right."

"But how can we," said Vida, "when we don't think so? How can a thing be

right for God when it doesn't seem fair to us?"

"Well, we must be mistaken ourselves, I suppose."

"No, I am not in a mistake," said Vida slowly. "I don't know about what is right and wrong in *everything*. I daresay in a great many things God knows better; but I know when a thing is not fair. I know it so well that I am *sure* I know it."

Arthur said nothing.

"What made me think about it," continued Vida, "was because Mary took me to her Bible-class last Sunday, and that was the lesson. And Mary said such dreadful things. She said that God was just the same still, and that He was just as angry now with everyone that made a mistake; and that, even if people did the best thing they could think of, if they made a

mistake about it, God would punish them. And she said the worst kind of mistake was to have wrong beliefs, for then we never could please God, though we did all the good things in the world. She said we must believe the Bible, and the Catechism, and all that she told us; and that if we doubted it ever so little, we would be just like Uzzah; and if God did not punish us now, he would do it afterwards. Now, Arthur, do you think God *can* be really good?"

"Well," said Arthur thoughtfully, "of course we ought to believe things that are right."

"But they might look wrong to us, Arthur. You know, I couldn't believe a thing unless I thought it was true, even if everyone else did; and I don't think God would like me to *say* I did, if I

didn't—at least, I wouldn't like it if I were He."

To Arthur there seemed a strange independence and familiarity in Vida's way of talking, and yet her eyes were full of tears. He could not understand it, but he tried to think of something comforting.

"God gave Christ to die for sinners, you know," he said diffidently.

"It seems as if God *must* have someone to punish," said Vida thoughtfully. "He would even let Christ be killed on the cross, though he had done nothing wrong. Think how angry he must have been when he would do that!"

Arthur ventured nothing further, the case was beyond his skill. As he looked at his little companion he was conscious of a break between them. These questions, which

were filling her to-day with such evident anxiety, were to him neither real nor interesting. He felt, for the first time, that his mind could not fully compass hers; yet there was something beautiful to him in this new mood. He watched her with admiration, and a certain shyness.

"There is one thing," said Vida, raising her head at length, with a brighter look, "one thing that is true at any rate, and it comforts me. God made everything."

Arthur waited inquiringly, not seeing what comfort this could give.

"If he made everything, he must have made Arran. Just look round, Arthur. Look at the green field there, and the gray rocks thrown over it, and the white waves on the sand, and the blue, blue mountains up the glen. I don't see how anyone that was hard and unkind could have made it all.

I sometimes say to myself, 'God *must* be good if he made Arran.'"

And Arthur looked round as she bade him; but his eyes soon returned to her face, and the conclusion that flitted through his mind rather was, that God must be good if he had made Vida.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was Monday night. Arthur and Vida were returning from a short walk, for the evening had brightened after a wet day. Tuesday was the day fixed for Vida to spend with Mrs. Hope, and they were now discussing how to make the most of it, as Arthur and his grandmother were to leave the next morning.

"Arthur," said Vida, "when people ask you to spend the day, how much of the day do they mean? You don't need to go before breakfast, do you?"

"Oh no. If you get there in time for

lunch at one, you'll do very well. And I think we'll do this, Vida: I'll come for you early, about half-past ten, and we'll go up the glen, and try the stream here for a little, and then, as we go into Carrachan, we can try the one there. I am sure we could get fish after this fine rain."

"I'm afraid that won't do," said Vida, shaking her head mournfully. "You see I'll be dressed. Nannie says I must have on a white frock, and my best jacket, and hat too"—Vida enumerated these articles as if each constituted a separate grievance—"and I couldn't go into the woods then. Everything will be wet, and fishing makes you rather untidy too. But you might do this, Arthur; you might fish all the morning, on your way, and call for me about twelve."

"And lose an hour and a half of our last day!" exclaimed Arthur.

"It wouldn't be lost if you got fish," said Vida innocently. "I thought you might like it better."

"Should *you* like it better, Vida?" said Arthur, in a tragic tone which Vida did not understand.

"Well, I would like you to get some fish," she replied meditatively; "and I know the burns will be splendid now."

Arthur heaved a deep sigh, and did not continue the conversation.

"Vida," said Arthur, when he arrived at the manse the next day, and found her ready for him, "you don't look quite like yourself to-day. You look rather—fashionable."

"Do you mean I look nice, or not?" asked Vida, after a moment's thought. "I don't know exactly what you mean by fashionable, Arthur."

"Why, I mean you look like—like girls in London."

"But is that any better than looking like myself?" asked Vida reflectively.

"Why, of course! Every lady likes to be fashionable. Ask Aunt Charlotte about that!"

"Then who decides what *is* fashionable?" inquired Vida.

"Oh, I suppose the milliners in Paris fix that."

"And do the ladies do what the milliners tell them?"

"Oh yes. And sometimes some great lady or princess wears a thing, and then everybody gets the same."

"But it might be an ugly thing," said Vida, "if she was a stupid sort of person."

"So it is, often. But it's *the* thing, for all that."

"Then," said Vida, "if everybody was quite fashionable, people would look all the same."

"Oh yes, pretty much."

"Well, I think it is very silly," sai Vida, a merry laugh softening the severe censure. "People ought to look like *themselves*, and their clothes ought just to be their own. What is the good of my wearing things that make you think of girls in London? I am just as good as girls in London, every bit."

When they reached the hotel, Mrs. Hope greeted Vida with a certain warmth, which Vida quickly felt, and under which the grave shyness of her manner partly gave way. "She is wonderfully improved," thought Mrs. Hope, glancing over Vida's white frock and black silk jacket, with its

frill at the neck, to her white straw hat, and the brown curls, which had lost their short bunchy look, and were growing long now as well as thick. "She is greatly improved, and that black and white style suits her."

After lunch came a long drive; then the others had a stroll on the shore, while Mrs. Hope had her afternoon rest. And so the time passed, Vida hardly knew how, till the evening came, and the little party sat down to a seven-o'clock dinner. Vida felt secretly shy of the array of shining glasses and tall folded napkins, but no one looking at her would have thought so; she only looked grave, and a little preoccupied.

"And what did you do with yourself all the long winter, Vida?" asked Mrs. Hope, as the meal went on.

"We had the nutting first," said Vida, reflecting. "After that I don't think anything happened till Christmas. Then Frank and Mary came for a week, and it rained. In January papa had to go to Glasgow for three days, and I went too."

"Do you often go to Glasgow?" asked Mrs. Hope.

"No, I was never there before."

"And what did you think of it?"

"It is not pretty at all," replied Vida. "The air is full of smoke and mist, and the houses are all close together, so many of them, rows and rows. The people have no gardens, and they all walk in crowds in the streets. I like some of the large houses. If they had had fields round them, and there had not been so many alike, they would have been pretty. Oh, but I forgot,

on Sunday, we went to the Cathedral, and *everything* there was beautiful, so much nicer than going to church."

"I did not know there was a cathedral in Glasgow," said Mrs. Hope.

"Oh yes," said Arthur, "rather a nice one, I believe."

"Ah, but you must come to England to see cathedrals," said Mrs. Hope to Vida; "we have a wonderful old cathedral in London, Vida. We call it Westminster Abbey. Many great men are buried there, and it is full of monuments and inscriptions."

"I wonder if there is anyone buried there that I know about," said Vida.

"Anyone you know about?" said Mrs. Hope good-humouredly. "Well, let me see. Do you know about Fox, or Pitt, or Dickens? They all lie there."

"No, I don't," said Vida, with a sigh, "I don't know much."

"Or Thackeray? or Macaulay?"

Vida's face flushed, and her eyes brightened. "We have a book at home——" she began, and interrupted herself. "Do you think, Mrs. Hope, it could be the same Macaulay that wrote about William the Third, and James the Second, and——"

"The History of England," said Mrs. Hope, smiling at her eagerness. "Yes, it is the same; there *is* only one Macaulay."

Vida drew a long breath, and forgot her dinner for a few moments.

Presently Mrs. Hope began to talk of the dulness of the winter, and to ask Vida whether she was not soon going to school.

"I am going in a year or two, I think," said Vida.

"You should ask your father to send you

at once," said Mrs. Hope smilingly. "It cannot be good for you to be so much alone."

"I *do* have lessons," said Vida. "Until I was ill, papa taught me every forenoon, and he is going to begin again next month."

"Oh yes, I know. But there are so many things besides lessons that girls learn at school."

"Are there?" said Vida, rather impressed by this remark. "I did not know that. What things are they?" She looked up as she spoke, with that simple, direct glance, that somehow often made Mrs. Hope inclined to turn aside.

"Oh, I can hardly tell you now. Many things that are necessary and important."

Vida flushed a little, as a glimmer of Mrs. Hope's meaning crossed her mind. "I try to be like mamma," she said slowly.

"I don't remember mamma, but Nannie does, and she tells me about her, and tries to teach me to be like her. When I grow up I want to be just like mamma."

The words were spoken in evident simplicity, but there was a touch of dignity in the tones, which Mrs. Hope did not fail to notice. She made no reply, but she said to herself: "Something might be made of that girl. She has a certain style about her—though Heaven only knows where she can have got it!"

It was striking eight when they rose from table, and Vida shortly after proposed to start on her way home. When she emerged from Mrs. Hope's room, ready for the walk, she stopped short on finding Arthur at the top of the stairs with his hat and stick.

"Are you going with me?" she ex-

claimed. "Oh, I don't want that at all. It will be quite light till I get home. You have had all that long walk to-day already, and Mrs Hope would like you to stay with her now. You *ought* to stay."

Mrs. Hope, who was behind, had been inclined to think so herself a moment before, but the vigour and unmistakable sincerity of Vida's protest amused her, and she declared graciously that she could not think of such a thing, and that Arthur must certainly go. Gravely, and not well satisfied with the arrangement, Vida said, "Good-night," and they started.

"Now, Arthur," said Vida, "I wish you had just stayed with your grandmamma."

"This is the last walk we shall have, Vida," said Arthur. "At the end of it we must say, 'Good-bye.'"

"Well, that makes no difference," said

Vida. "The walk this afternoon would have done for the last instead, and we could just as well have said 'Good-bye' now at the door. I don't think you are very polite—to Mrs. Hope, Arthur."

"Well, I can't help it," said Arthur rather shortly, for his own conscience seconded the hint. "I can be polite to *her* all the rest of the year."

"Well, but it is stupid," persisted Vida, "your coming to-night; because I don't care a bit whether you come or not, and I daresay she does."

"Oh, Vida, don't you care a little?" cried Arthur so pleadingly that she looked at him in surprise.

"Of course, I would rather you came," she said. "I don't mean that. I only mean—it doesn't matter much."

Whether this further statement was more

satisfactory, Arthur did not say, and they walked on in silence to the end of the village. Vida was admitting to herself, with some regret, as she had done several times during the past week, that Arthur was changed. A year ago their intercourse had been perfectly enjoyable, free, unrestrained, entirely satisfactory. Now, something was different. It seemed to Vida that Arthur no longer treated her as an equal companion. He never clapped her on the shoulder now, or challenged her to run a race. He always wanted to do little things for her, that she could easily do for herself. In talking, he did not assert his own opinions as much as she liked him to do; he waited for hers. And yet things that she said seemed often to hurt him in some mysterious way, and then he would look unhappy, and really she did not

know what it was all about. Vida sighed, and thought it inexplicable, resolving, however, as Arthur *was* leaving to-morrow, to be careful and not vex him any more to-night.

"Vida," said Arthur as they reached the open road, "one reason why I wanted to come to-night is because I have something very particular to say to you; and this is the last chance. But, before we begin, I want to say this: You must take it in *real earnest*, Vida, because that is how I mean it, and it is very important."

"Yes; very well," said Vida meekly.

"You remember last summer we promised always to be brother and sister—all our lives. Well, I have thought about that a great deal, and I think we must alter it. I don't think it will do."

"Why?" asked Vida.

"Because we might be separated in spite of our promises," said Arthur. "After we grow up, I might marry someone else, and so might you, if we were only brother and sister."

"I daresay we might," said Vida, reflectively. "I might get married after a long time, if papa and Nannie both died. It would be better than living with Frank and Mary."

"You see it won't do to be brother and sister," said Arthur eagerly. "I'll tell you what we must be, Vida. We must be *lovers* instead, and then we shall really belong to one another."

"I don't know anything about lovers," said Vida, dubiously.

"Well, you know what *sweethearts* are, don't you, Vida?"

"Yes, I think I do," said Vida, slowly.

"They are people who do silly things. They hold one another's hands, and they go out and walk together all alone. Everybody laughs at them. They are foolish sort of people."

"No, Vida, you are quite wrong!" cried Arthur warmly. "They are not foolish. They are happy, they are the only happy people in the world. They live for one another, and sometimes they die for one another."

"Do you think *that* is very happy?" asked Vida, doubtfully.

"Why *yes*, Vida," said Arthur, earnestly, "because it is for love. So you see what I mean. We must be lovers, and give one another our promises, and never care for anyone else; and, in a few years, we shall be married, and be always together, and that will be better still."

Vida still thought the prospect doubtful. "Then we can't change our minds, after we promise," she said meditatively.

"Oh no. That is the best of it all, Vida. If we are lovers, we shall belong to one another *always*."

"But I don't think I *can* promise, Arthur. After I am old enough to be married, I might see someone else I liked better than you. Besides, you might be in India by that time, and I might be tired waiting."

"Lovers must *trust* one another, Vida," said Arthur, in a deep voice; "and they never weary waiting."

"I don't know how to do all that," said Vida with a sigh. "I like to be brother and sister better."

"And as to changing our minds," continued Arthur, "I shall never change mine.

I can never like any other girl so much as you; and I thought you would have felt the same."

"Well; but that is rather different," interposed Vida. "You have seen a great many girls, so you can tell which you like best, but I have scarcely seen anybody. I do like you *very* much, but you are the only boy that I know, and so I can't tell whether I should like you best, if I knew the others. And when I grow up, and go to Campbelton and Glasgow, I might see someone even nicer, and I might be sorry I had promised. Don't you see?"

"I don't see how you *can* talk like that," said Arthur vehemently. "It seems to me so clear that we are just made for one another."

"Well, perhaps we are," said Vida. "But we had better wait and see. We *might* be

each made for somebody else, you know. You can't tell."

"Yes I can," said Arthur passionately. "And I won't wait, Vida. You can do anything you like. You can love somebody else if you choose. But I give you my promise now—I am your lover always. I shall never care for anyone else, wherever I go. You may be sure of that—whenever you happen to think of me."

Vida was silent. This talk was very uncomfortable, and very puzzling. "I feel as if I were rather mean," she said to herself; "but I can't help it. If Arthur understands about these things, he can promise what he likes. But I *don't* understand it, not a bit, and I won't promise anything."

"Do you think you will forget me, Vida?" asked Arthur wistfully, as they drew up to the Manse.

"Oh *no*, Arthur, never," said Vida, speaking the more warmly as a tide of self-reproach began to set in over her mind. "And, Arthur, I think *very likely* you are nicer than anybody else."

"May I have this?" asked Arthur, after they had said, "Good-bye," laying his hand upon a rose which Vida had been wearing in her frock.

"That? Oh no, it is all withered," said Vida, throwing it on the ground. "I will show you the bush. It is just round the house, and you can cut a fresh one."

"I don't *want* a fresh one," said Arthur. "I don't want any but this;" and he stooped to pick it up.

"It is all withered. I have worn it all day," said Vida, staring at him. She thought him more incomprehensible than ever.

"That is just why I want it," said Arthur in despair.

"You want it because it is withered?" repeated Vida in blank amazement.

"I want it because you have worn it,' said Arthur. But his words were drowned by a ringing laugh, which Vida could no longer restrain, and with that sound in his ears he turned away.

CHAPTER IX.

FULLY two years after the close of our last chapter, Mr. Callander and his daughter sat down to tea together one chilly evening in September. It had been an unusually busy day at the Manse. Frequent footsteps on the stairs, and a constant movement in the room overhead, had been audible even to the minister in his study, and had brought home to his mind the fact that, on the next day, his daughter was leaving him to go to school. He was just reflecting now, as he looked at her across the table, that, by that time to-morrow, a certain change would

have passed over his home. Mr. Callander's was not an emotional nature. It was chiefly as a pupil that he was sorry to lose Vida. Her fresh young aptitude for his favourite studies had given a new interest to his life, and he expected now to find his forenoons rather longer than he cared about, till he should be accustomed to the change. There had been a satisfaction to him during lesson hours in contemplating the clearness and vigour of Vida's mind; a calm intellectual satisfaction with which his own relationship to her had very little to do. At other times they were but little to one another. No *confidence* could truly be said to exist between them. During all these years' intercourse with her father, Vida had found very little in him to interest her, or gain her affection. At the same time she was frank enough with him. As a child,

she had often treated him with reserve, but she was not by nature shy; and as she grew older, and her character developed, his individuality did not impress itself upon her sufficiently to modify even her manner when in his presence. So he had seen her ways and heard her talk, with the negative satisfaction, at least, of meeting with little which called for disapproval. And he had become accustomed to having her there.

Just now he was looking at her with a vague sense of something wanting in her appearance.

"Vida," at length he said slowly, "where is your hair?"

"It's all here, papa," said Vida, laying her hand on the back of her head. "Nannie says that tall girls don't have their hair hanging down, and she was trying it this way before to-morrow."

"You are growing up, Vida," was the minister's next remark; "how old are you?"

"Fifteen and a half," replied Vida, flushing at this unusual token of interest.

"Has Nannie got everything," said Mr. Callander, after a short pause, "with the money I gave her? Are you sure you have got enough of—things? Girls need a great number of things."

"Yes, papa," said Vida. "We have got everything we could think of."

"Your mamma would have liked you to have everything," continued Mr. Callander, rather abstractedly. "She had a great many things herself, when she was a girl."

It was not often he named her mother. His last words suggested a new idea to Vida.

"Papa," she said, with great eagerness,

"did you know mamma when she was a girl?"

"She was only a girl when I married her," he said in the same dreamy tone. Vida waited, longing for more, but that was all he said. The next sound was a knock at the front door, followed by the entrance of Mr. Jeffrey.

"I came to bid Miss Vida good-bye," he said. "Not any, thank you; I had tea before I left."

So when Nannie had removed the tray the little party sat round the fire. Vida was very quiet; she felt *silenced* somehow. It was so seldom that anything had happened to her, so seldom that she had been the centre of thought and interest as she was to-night, that she found it difficult to adjust herself to these strange circumstances.

Mr. Jeffrey, after inquiring about her journey, and about the size and neighbourhood of the school in Edinburgh to which she was going, produced, from his pocket, a small parcel, and proceeded to unfold it.

"I brought this with me to ask your acceptance of it," he said. "Are you going to learn drawing at school?"

"Oh yes," said Vida, "I must learn drawing."

"It is an old pencil-case," he continued, handing it to her. "I got it from my mother on a birthday long ago—my twelfth birthday I believe."

"It looks quite new," said Vida, opening it. A feeling of embarrassment made her voice low. It was a curious old case of fine soft leather, with a quaint design traced over it, rolling up like a needle-book. Inside, the pencils were all in their places,

with the ruler, penknife, india rubber, and little pair of compasses.

"It looks quite new," repeated Vida.

"I was careful of my things as a boy," said Mr. Jeffrey, with his gentle smile. "I put away this case and continued to use my old one. And now, I thought perhaps you would kindly make use of it for me, as it was only lying about at home."

Vida thought it did not look exactly as if it had been "lying about." She could not find a word to say.

Mr. Callander, who had been fidgeting for the last few minutes, now broke in with a constrained and difficult "Very good of you, Jeffrey, I am sure." Any display or even indication of sentiment always made Mr. Callander fidget. He wondered what people wanted with that kind of thing.

As Vida continued slowly to roll and

unroll the pencil-case, without speaking, Mr. Jeffrey remarked lightly, to break the silence: "You may notice my initials in a corner inside. I might have had them erased, but it did not occur to me. Perhaps, as a keepsake from an old friend, you may not object to having it as it is. But if you would *prefer* it," he continued, after a pause which Vida did not break, "I can very easily——"

Vida raised her head; "No, Mr. Jeffrey," she said with an effort, "I think it is very pretty, and I like it best just as you got it so long ago." Mr. Jeffrey looked earnestly in her face as she spoke, for he had noticed that there were tears in her eyes. Vida felt ashamed of them, and wondered what had come over her. Perhaps her heart was fuller than usual this last night at home. At all events, something or other about this

little gift and its history had touched her, as people *will* sometimes be touched quite unexpectedly, and much against their will. As for Mr. Jeffrey, he did not soon forget the look of the tears in those bright brown eyes. He thought, as he went home, that Vida had looked older too, to-night. After all, she was nearly grown up; she must be almost sixteen now. Sixteen years old. And the difference between sixteen and thirty-eight was—how much? Well, such things have happened. It was possible—it was just possible, no more. But Mr. Jeffrey quickened his steps as he thought of it, and thankfully accepted the bare possibility as a good gift for the present.

"Miss Viday," said Nannie, the same evening, when she came up to lay the last

of the clean collars on the tray of Vida's box, "when ye're at Campbelton the morn's nicht, ye'll let Mistress Frank see a' yer things?" Vida was at the glass removing her hair-pins.

"Well, Nannie," she said slowly, "if she wants to see them, of course she can. Oh yes."

"But ye'll *offer* her to see them?" persisted Nannie. There was no reply to this. Nannie put a finishing touch or two to the box, and then closed the lid, and came gently up to the table.

"My bairn," she said seriously, "I want ye to tak yer richt place and yer ain place wi' them a', and wi' a' body that ye'll meet whaur ye're gaun. But ye'll dae that wi' the mair grace and the less fash if ye gie their richts and their dues to ither folk, and yer sister-in-law budes to be considert."

"But this is such a little thing, Nannie," said Vida. "It's a perfect trifle."

"Then what way suld ye no dae't?"

"Very well, I will," said Vida resignedly, after a pause.

"That's a gude bairn. It's a sma' thing, as ye say, but it'll pleasure her, and it's worth yer while. Ye ken, she whiles expec's things that ye *canna* gi' her sae weel."

"But it won't be to please *her* a bit," said Vida. "It will only be to please you, dear, good old Nannie;" and she threw her arms round her old nurse. Nannie lifted her hand to stroke the young head that was growing so fast out of her reach.

"My bairn!" she said yearningly.

"I will be good, Nannie," said Vida earnestly, as the most comforting assurance she could think of. "I will promise you to be a good girl while I am away."

"For a moment or two Nannie did not speak. Then she said, with a falter in her voice: "It was mysel', bairn, that wanted ye to gang, and I wad be the last to haud ye back; and yet, I misdoobt me the nicht. I misdoobt me sair."

"Do you know much about boarding-schools, Nannie?" asked Vida soberly.

"I ken little o' them," replied Nannie, with a sigh; "but I jalouse they're gey like the rest o' the warld, and I ken something aboot *that*. They'll gie ye mony a gude lesson, I dinna doobt, and teach ye a' thing that a leddy oucht to ken. But I wad ill like to see ony differ in *yersel'*, and I ken weel they'll pit mony a notion i' yer heed that never was there afore."

"But I won't let them, Nannie," said Vida playfully. "If I don't like their notions, I won't have them."

Nannie was deep in thought, considering how to explain herself better.

"Bairn," she said at length, "ye ken yersel' what's richt and what's wrang. And I want ye to mind this. It doesna' matter whaur ye gang ower a' the warld, there can never be ony *ither* richt and wrang than what ye ken o'. Dinna let them cheat ye oot o' that."

Nannie's tone was grave, almost to solemnity, and Vida felt subdued by it, as she answered: "No, Nannie, I won't," though she wondered, in her simple independent mind, why Nannie should think such advice necessary. It was not till long afterwards that she understood its force and comprehensiveness.

The next morning dawned. The forenoon passed, Vida thought, like a dream,

and the evening found her in her brother's house in Campbelton. Tea was over, and Frank had gone to his study, when she remembered her promise to Nannie. "Mary," she said to her sister-in-law, "would you like to look at my new clothes?"

"Very well," said Mary; and they repaired to Vida's room, where stood the two black boxes, with the white letters "V. C." freshly painted on them. Mary said very little, as she turned over their contents. This outfit was a grievance to her. She considered that Vida ought to have confided to her charge so important a matter. Instead of that, she had not even been consulted. Nannie and Vida had done everything on their own responsibility, and Mary felt sorry, as she looked at the various things, that there was not more which she could find fault with.

"You should have had one or two of your white skirts embroidered," she remarked, as she got near the bottom of the first box.

"I don't mind much about that," replied Vida contentedly. "My dresses are not long enough to be held up yet, so no one would have seen them if I had."

"Why didn't you have these nicely trimmed?" asked Mary next, lifting something else.

"Well," said Vida, "it would have cost more, and we didn't like to ask papa for any more money, for I thought he had given us plenty."

"That crochet edging looks so common," continued Mary, "I think I would rather have had none at all."

"I don't think it does," said Vida, a thread of defiance beginning to appear in her voice. "It's a piece that Nannie took of

her own. She made it when she was a girl. *I* think the pattern is very *un*common."

"That looks like real lace," said Mary, suddenly pouncing upon a ruffle that lay on the tray. "Why, it is, I declare! Is it, Vida?"

"Yes," said Vida.

"That must have cost you a great deal," said Mary, turning it over. "Now, Vida, it would have been far better to have spent the money in pretty trimming for these other things. What made you think of buying this?"

"We didn't buy it," said Vida, in a lower tone; "Nannie made it, and these sleeves too. And she took the lace off her best cap. She said she had got it once long ago from mamma. I think mamma gave it her to trim her cap for my baptism." Vida's voice trembled a little, as the vision of

Nannie's well-known best cap, in its now forlorn and denuded condition, came before her mind.

"How coarse your winter stockings are!" exclaimed Mary. "I never can bear woollen stockings unless they are the very finest. Fine stockings are always a mark of a lady. I wonder how you can wear these."

"They're all Nannie's knitting," said Vida, with a more perceptible break in her voice. "And she can't see to knit anything fine now, or they would have been fine enough."

"Do you mean to say she made all these?"

"Yes, every one of them. She has been knitting them ever since the winter. And I would rather have them just as they are. Mary, I feel rather tired, and I think I must go to bed."

It was well that Mary at that moment happened to hear her baby's cry, and, hastening her good-night, hurried out of the room; for the door had scarcely closed behind her when Vida's tears began to fall on the despised stockings. And every time her sight cleared, so that she could see them again, her eyes seemed to fill faster. We often hear of the pathos attaching to old clothes. Vida discovered that night, that *new* clothes may have a pathetic aspect too.

How tenderly she lifted the various articles that Mary had thrown down! How reverently she folded them, and restored them to the places where Nannie's hands had packed them! There seemed to be a *soul* in each of them, bearing witness to faithful love, and unwearied ingenuity, and unconscious self-denial. A poor outfit, a stranger might have called it, but to Vida's

eyes there were threads of gold woven through it all.

Next day she went on to Edinburgh, and was duly received by her new teacher, Miss Gordon.

The first few months at school were not pleasant to Vida. She felt out of sympathy with the life around her. The rules seemed innumerable, and needlessly harassing. It was hard to have lessons, recreation, exercise, sleep, food, doled out to her by rule and measure. It was difficult even to conform to the most trifling requirements, to moderate her springing step to the prescribed pace, and soften her natural voice to the school-room undertone. Then she did not feel at one with her companions. She was not accustomed to the society of girls, and to the peculiar atmosphere which such

a society creates around itself. The little incidents of the school-world which absorbed all the thoughts of the other girls seemed to her trifles. The conversation to which she listened in her room did not seem worth taking part in; indeed, she gave offence, more than once, to her chattering companions by breaking unintentionally into a short ringing laugh of amusement and contempt. And she did not shine in the school-room. Her favourite studies, Latin, Greek, and mathematics, were unknown here. Her history and geography were found to have been sadly desultory. She knew very little of music, and not a word of French. Dancing was a complete mystery to her, and she despised it too much, and felt too down-hearted to learn it easily. Her feeling, when the dancing hour arrived, was somewhat akin to that of the

Jews when they complained: "They that wasted us required of us mirth." Altogether Vida was a good deal mortified to find that it must be a long time before she could hope to distinguish herself in anything.

Her companions, however, did not find that they could laugh at her. On her first day in the school-room, when the French master addressed to her some simple question in French, a slight titter broke out among the girls, and they all looked towards Vida, expecting from her some display of school-girl awkwardness and embarrassment. Vida turned at once to the girl who sat next to her, and said with her usual simple directness, in a tone loud enough to be heard by all: "Will you please tell the gentleman that I am sorry I can't answer him?" The message was given,

the master bowed, and the girls, somewhat disappointed, returned to their books. In those days, it seemed to Vida that girls were strangely unreasonable creatures. She wondered at the indifference of some of them to the most interesting studies, no less than at the ecstasies of others over a new pattern of cotton crochet. The trifling nature of their disputes astonished her, and the demonstrative ardour of their reconciliations. She could not understand the delight they had in breaking any of the rules, a delight which sometimes led them to take an extraordinary amount of trouble for that purpose. She found it difficult to reconcile their want of independence in some matters with their ouchiness in others. She studied them curiously, remaining, as it were, outside of their circle. But, gradually, she came to

notice good and admirable qualities in many of them, some qualities, too, in which she felt herself deficient. One or two among them, at length, became her friends; and so, coming by degrees to feel herself more and more identified with them, she left off criticising, and often found herself chatting and laughing with the rest. She found it best to take things as they came; to make allowances; to throw aside some of her reserve, and to enter into the life of the little world about her. She fell into her natural place; she found her level, which is perhaps the main advantage to be derived from school-life.

CHAPTER X.

It was an afternoon in March. The young ladies of Miss Gordon's school—Vida and her companions—had come in from their walk, and were now assembled in the school-room, for it was preparation hour. Mademoiselle was presiding. Miss Gordon had gone from home for a day or two. Vida was standing at the desk, waiting for an explanation of a difficulty, when the door opened and a servant brought a card to her. It bore the name, "Mr. Arthur Kennedy," and a pencilled request that Vida would see him for a few minutes, either then or at

any time she might fix. Vida handed the card to the French governess, who, with some difficulty, made herself mistress of its contents.

"The young gentleman is waiting," said the servant.

Mademoiselle started. "What is this that you say?" she asked. "Yong? Did you say *yong* gentleman?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl.

Mademoiselle looked to Vida for confirmation.

"Yes, mademoiselle," said Vida simply, "he is young. What will be the best time for him to call again?"

Mademoiselle looked as if her breath had been taken away.

"Ah, how do I know?" she said. "He is then, perhaps, a cousin, a re-lative?"

"No; he is not a relation," replied Vida.

"He is an old friend. I knew him very well at home, a long time ago."

"At home? It is, then, that he knows Monsieur Callander, your father?"

"Oh yes; papa knows him," said Vida.

"It may be he comes from seeing Monsieur Callander," suggested Mademoiselle eagerly, "and calls according to his wish?"

"It is possible," said Vida; "but I don't think so."

"For what then does he come?" said Mademoiselle despairingly. "Ah! that I am infortunate. I come but three months to this country. Meess Gordon departs, and I am left in the head of affairs. A circumstance arrives. I have no instruction. I am—how do you say it?—quite in a loss."

Mademoiselle looked around pathetically, then spent a few moments in deep thought.

"Look here, Meess Vida," she said then, suddenly lifting her head—"look here" was an expression Mademoiselle had picked up from the girls, and was rather proud of, considering it good English—"look here, *mon enfant.* I will not refuse to you to see the young friend who is so intimate. But to see him *alone—c'est autre chose.* It must be that I, also, am present—*je me tiens à cela.*"

"Certainly, mademoiselle," said Vida.

"But then," said Mademoiselle, by way of comfort, "it is not that I shall understand what you speak. When you will both talk, it shall not be to me but as 'Ebrew. Still, it is well that one's duty be done."

So, after considerable delay, Arthur received a message, fixing a later hour the same day for his call.

When the time came, and Vida and the governess were seated in the drawing-room, waiting his arrival, Vida felt suddenly shy. It was very odd, and uncomfortable. Shy of Arthur, her old playmate! She glanced back mentally to the old days, remembering their walks, and talks, and disputes, that she might show herself how absurd it was; but she could not prevent her heart beating more quickly than she liked when the door opened, and Arthur entered. It was evident that *he* felt no embarrassment. Instead of that he had a preoccupied, almost gloomy look; and after bowing somewhat absently on being introduced to Mademoiselle, he turned with little more than a half-smile to Vida.

"I only came into Edinburgh last night," he said. "I had written to your brother for your address, but I happened to see you

and the other young ladies coming in from your walk to-day, so I did not need to wait for his answer. It is a long time since I have had the—since we have met."

Mademoiselle, who had moved away a little with her work, settled herself to listen diligently, finding to her satisfaction that she understood the speaker pretty well.

Vida was trying to make out what change there was in Arthur. He had grown taller, stronger-looking, and, most people would have said, handsomer; but Vida quickly decided that he was not so nice-looking as he used to be. His expression was not happy. There was an indescribable want of freshness about his manner, which had also lost a little of its deference; and Vida noticed a slight stereotyped hardness in the intonation of his voice—a trick, by-the-way, which the voice soon learns, when its owner

habitually makes use of it to utter conventionalisms instead of convictions. But now Arthur began to feel uncomfortable under Vida's simple steady gaze. He felt that he must speak.

"I can hardly tell you why I have come," he said, with a short uneasy laugh. At the moment he was wishing, inwardly, that he had *not* come. Vida waited; and, after a short pause, he continued, with an effort.

"The truth is that I am rather out of temper with things in general. I have been disappointed in my prospects, and I feel a good deal at a loss about various things. I don't mean that I have come to ask your *advice*. I am rather a poor hand at taking advice. But if you can spare the time to listen to some talk on a subject so uninteresting as myself——"

Then Vida began to feel a little sorry for him. "I am quite free just now," she replied, quietly, "and I shall be very glad to hear about yourself. It is a long time since I have heard anything of you."

Arthur detected a slight touch of reserve in Vida's tone, and dimly guessed that she had not found him exactly what she had expected. The change, slight as it was, did not accord with his likings, or with his recollections of her, and when he spoke again, it was in a different manner. Without knowing it, he was trying to get back to the old friendly footing.

"I'll tell you all about it," he said. "For the last two or three years I have been studying hard—that is to say, not *hard* like some fellows, but really very well, you know—hard for *me*. I did much better at Harrow than I expected. Then I went

to college, and for the last six months I have been working for a particular government examination for the Indian Civil Service, and I've not passed. When it came to the last month, and all the other fellows put on an extra pressure, I found I couldn't stand any more. My health is very good now, but I had been doing just as much as I was able for before, and couldn't go beyond it. I didn't break down—in health I mean—for I stopped short of that; but I've not passed, and I would have given the world to pass. Then I should have got an appointment, and gone right out to India. Now it must be put off for months, and I have a sort of feeling that I never *shall* pass now. It would be an awful bore to work myself up to the same point again, after being ever so long idle."

"But you don't need to be idle," sug-

gested Vida; "you can work in the meantime, as hard as you like."

"No, I can't; not now. I have no object for it now, and I can't grind away all by myself for nothing."

"Why must you go to India, Arthur?" asked Vida.

"I want to go. All my life I have looked forward to it. I don't know that I should stay very long; perhaps not, but I must go. I was born in India, and I have a fancy the climate would suit me. But of course what chiefly makes me think of it is that my father gained distinction there, and everything that I know about him is connected with India."

"You might go on a trip," suggested Vida, "and then you could see everything, and stay as long as you wished without getting an appointment."

"No," said Arthur, slowly, "that won't be the same thing. I must have—the fact is, Vida, I have a little ambition on my own account. I have a notion that my father's son might be some good out there."

"Well, if you have," said Vida warmly, "why can't you keep at your studies for a little, and then go in next time, and pass this examination? I wonder you can think of giving up."

"Well; but, Vida," said Arthur, "you forget that I *have* been working all this time. I think I ought to have a holiday now."

"Why do you want a holiday? Aren't you quite well now?"

"Oh yes, I'm well enough. But every one must have a rest sometimes."

"But what does it matter about a *holiday*," continued Vida, emphasizing the word

rather scornfully, "compared with learning things, and doing something great? You might take a fortnight, and go for a sail, or a walking trip. Then you would be ready to begin."

"Nobody works like that," said Arthur, "unless they are going to make their own living. I can tell you," he added virtuously, "I am the only one in our set that does anything to speak of."

"What a bad set they must be!" said Vida meditatively.

"No, they're not. They're all gentlemen, well off, good families, and in the best society. You don't know about young men in London, Vida. Of course it is different for girls."

'Do you mean it is right for young men be lazy?" asked Vida.

"I mean—I just mean that they have a

different sort of life altogether. All these young fellows that I know go in for having a good time, and enjoying themselves, and I don't see why I should work on for ever like a ploughman. And now that I've made a mess of this examination, I'm more than half inclined to throw the whole thing up, in the meantime, and do as they do."

"*What* do they do? How do they enjoy themselves?" asked Vida.

Arthur fidgeted. It was much easier to speak in general terms than to go into particulars.

"Oh, I can't tell you exactly," he said. "They have plenty of money, and they do whatever they like."

"Then you mean that they do *wrong* things?" asked Vida simply.

"I tell you, Vida, they don't think about right and wrong as you do. Nobody thinks

these things wrong in London. And, of course, a man is quite different from a woman."

Vida opened her eyes at this new doctrine.

"I don't believe that," she said stoutly. "A man has just as much right to be good as a woman has. If I were a man I would be ashamed to say I couldn't be as good as a woman; and I don't believe any man *would* say so, unless he was determined to do something wrong, and wanted an excuse."

Arthur was silent. That warm independent utterance, how well he remembered it! It recalled to him in a moment the old Arran days, his first acquaintance with Vida, and the happy outdoor summer life he had shared with her. Then he remembered their talks, how naturally and naïvely

she had spoken her thoughts, how fearlessly she had brought all matters of dispute to her own simple standard, how boldly she had attacked his conventional notions, how simply and confidently she had maintained her right to think for herself. And now that he heard her speak again he seemed awakening from a dream. Something within told him that this girlish voice was true; that he had listened to none so true since he heard it last. His false pleadings, and worldly maxims, seemed suddenly to shrink and wither away, as finding themselves in an uncongenial atmosphere. Arthur had no natural inclination towards folly, or selfishness, or vice; but he had had a bad chance. His grandmother had over-indulged him from his childhood; she had yielded to him constantly, and had exacted nothing from him, under a mistaken

notion that, by so doing, she would gain his affections; forgetting that all affection, worth the name, must be grounded in respect. Arthur had early discovered that there was nothing which he could not extort from her, if he only showed determination enough; and, of late years, he had had more and more of his own way, just as he saw fit to demand it. While he tyrannised over his grandmother, he regarded his Aunt Charlotte with utter indifference, which only changed into defiance when she happened to oppose him. She had never shown, or felt, any affection for him, since the day that he was brought home to them, a little child. She had been *proud* of him certainly. He could remember that sometimes, when he was brought into the drawing-room to see her friends, in a good temper, with a pretty sash and well-

brushed curls, she was pleased, and would even pat his head and kiss him. But he could easily distinguish, as all children can, between praise and petting such as this, and the real love that is not dependent upon their looks or their manners, but opens its arms to them, not the less readily, when they are in disgrace, or mischief, or trouble. Then Arthur had no near ties. He had never known what it was to have a mother or sister to love him, and lean upon him, and train him unconsciously in manliness and self-denial. The society in which he had been brought up, and which was already beginning to pay court to him and flatter him, was empty, cold-hearted, false. Under these influences his better nature had gradually gone to sleep. How could it be otherwise? But he was not yet quite spoiled, or he would not have

felt, as he now did, abashed and confused at Vida's words, and the train of associations and questionings which they called forth within him.

Vida began to wonder at his silence. "Arthur," she said at length, half-timidly, "you are not going to be like that?"

Arthur roused himself with a sigh. "I don't *want* to, Vida," he replied, and he was in earnest—it was long since he had spoken with such real feeling; "but the difficulty is, I don't know what there is to keep me back."

"You must keep *yourself* back," said Vida.

He shook his head. "I can't manage it. I can't get hold of a thing and stick to it as you would do, Vida; and when everything you see and hear, and everyone you know, drags you in the same direction, it's easy to

say, 'Keep yourself back,' but how are you to do it? As long as I was studying, tha kept me straight; but I don't care for that now, and what else have I got to do? You know what it is at home. There's Aunt Charlotte, I could never have anything in common with *her*. Grandmamma is very well, and, I'm sure, I'm very fond of her; but a young fellow can't spend all his time with his grandmother. And as for friends—if you knew the sort of fellows I have to make friends of, Vida—I was telling you just now that they were gentlemen, and in the best society—that's what people think of them, and what they think of themselves—but if you knew what they are, you would pity me, Vida—you would indeed. I haven't a chance."

Vida felt the force of his words, and she did pity him with all her heart, as she sat

thoughtfully pondering the situation. "I don't know what we are to do!" she said mournfully after a little, and then they were both silent.

"Arthur," said Vida, after a pause, as a sudden idea struck her, "sometimes, when people want to be good, and they can't, they go to see a minister, and ask him to help them."

"Well," said Arthur slowly, "I don't know that I feel equal to that. Then, you see, ministers are such a poor lot. It would be no good my talking to our clergyman at home. He's a decent old fellow, very; he dines with us once a year. But I know him well enough, and all that's in him, and I know well enough he couldn't help me in the least. He would talk about baptism and confirmation, and I daresay he would be very kind, but as to understanding the

difficulty I was in, or saying anything that would be of *real* use—clergymen are not up to that sort of thing."

"It's quite true," said Vida thoughtfully. "I have sometimes wondered how it is that all the times I've heard papa preach, he never happened to say anything that did me any good—at least, I don't think he ever did."

"I've sometimes thought lately," continued Arthur, "that I ought to get some help out of going to church (I've thought about all these things, Vida, more than you would suppose); but it's the same thing there. Nothing that I hear seems to get a hold of me. It's all very fine. I like to hear the service when the reading is good, and the organ well played. But that's one thing, and my life through the week is another; there's no connection between the two; not

the smallest. People say the prayers are beautiful, and so they are—fine old English, and in perfect taste; I admire them very much—but the worst of it is"—Arthur hesitated a little—"I suppose it's no wonder that I don't get much out of the prayers, or the service either, for I have been thinking lately—or rather I have been *inclined* to think lately, Vida—that there is no God. Don't interrupt me for a moment," seeing her about to speak, "and I will tell you why I think so. Isn't this England a Christian country, the leader among Christian countries?"

"I suppose so," replied Vida.

"And isn't London the capital of it?"

Vida admitted that undeniable fact.

"Well," pursued Arthur, "here is the thing. I suppose I know in London several hundred people of the upper class, of the

class that has better position, and greater advantages, and more influence than any other; and among all these people—I have thought them all over, Vida, I am not speaking at random—I don't know one, not one, who believes in God. Of course they *say* they do, every time they go to church, but they don't, any more than they believe that they themselves are 'miserable sinners.' Why if they believed one-half, one-tenth part, of the creed they *say* every Sunday, it would upset their whole lives—and some of them want upsetting, too. And then, Vida, there are some people—and some of them are the cleverest and wisest men we have—who *say* there is no God, that there can't be a God, and that there is no life to come after this. They have found out all kinds of things, all about—geology, you know, and matter, and what people's minds are made

of, and how the creation is all a mistake in Genesis—things that people never knew long ago. And if that is all true, then of course it doesn't matter whether we are good or bad."

"I am not sure of that," said Vida, who had been listening attentively. "I think it would be better to be good even then."

"Why?" cried Arthur, with a gesture of impatience. "If there is no God who made me and who expects me to do right, and if when I die that is to be the end of me, why should I care what I do? I had better enjoy myself while I have the chance, and let everything else go."

"I don't think so, Arthur," said Vida, gradually feeling surer of her ground. "I think this: Whether God made you or not, or even if there was no God, at any rate here you are. If you are to have no other

life, at any rate you have got *this* life in the meantime; and you know that some things are right, and some are wrong—you can't *help* knowing it. It must be better to choose the right things, even if they are difficult, and to be the kind of man you were meant to be, rather than to do whatever you like, and live as if you knew no difference. But, Arthur," continued Vida, with a change of tone, "I want you to listen to *me* now. We don't need to talk about all this, because, one thing I can tell you—there is a God." Vida spoke with certainty, in the tone of one who was contributing an important fact to the discussion. The quiet confidence with which she spoke made no small impression upon Arthur. He started a little.

"How do you know that?" he asked almost sharply.

"Because I know some one who knows Him," replied Vida readily. "And He is not hard and unkind, Arthur; I always used to think He must be. He is good and very loving, but I should think very few people know Him. Mr. Jeffrey does. It was he that I meant; and I think Nannie knows Him too. One Sunday, last summer, Mr. Jeffrey preached for papa, and it was then he told us about God. It was not the least like *preaching*. It was telling us things that he really *knew*, you know. I don't remember—I can't tell you what he said, but he just showed us what God is like; and I have known ever since then that God is a real person, and that He is very kind. If I needed Him at any time, I would try to find Him. I wouldn't be afraid of Him now."

"But then," said Arthur, "Mr. Jeffrey

may believe all that, but he is only one man; and think of the numbers of people who don't believe it."

"That doesn't matter," said Vida. "I mean it makes no difference. Why, Arthur, if one person told you he had seen something—a person you could trust—you would believe it, though no one else in the world might have happened to see it. A thing must be *there* for even *one* person to see it."

"And you think," said Arthur slowly, "that because Mr. Jeffrey believes in God——"

"It isn't that he *believes* in Him, Arthur. He *knows* Him, as you know me. I think he knows Him better than anyone else, for he is very shy with other people. If Mr. Jeffrey went to London, and preached

to those people that you know, they would see that there must be a God."

"I don't think they would," said Arthur

"Why not?"

"Because they don't *want* to see it—most of them. If Mr. Jeffrey, or anyone else, could convince them that there is a God, they would find it very inconvenient. It suits them much better not to believe it."

"I never thought of that," said Vida. "Arthur," she asked gently, after a pause, "would it suit *you* better not to believe it?"

Arthur did not speak. The question had suddenly solved a certain confusion existing in his mind. He had told Vida that during the past weeks he had thought a good deal about the point they were discussing. It

was true; and he had sometimes wondered that, after all his thinking, he had gained no more light, no clearer conviction one way or other, than before. Looking back, he now saw, as by a flash, the obstacle that had stood in his way. He had turned, ever and again, from the most solemn thoughts and inquiries to a secret hankering after a life of self-indulgence and so-called pleasure; and he had continued to cherish a half-intention of, sooner or later, gratifying this desire. He had been seeking God; but this hidden indecision had prevented his search being thoroughly hearty and sincere; success in it would have been, to use his own expression, "inconvenient." He now saw that the practical question must be decided first, before he could be in a position, honestly and fairly, to grapple

with the other. Then he remembered that he had not answered.

"I don't know, Vida," he said thoughtfully. "I can't tell. It depends on what I make up my mind to do; and I must think this all over. One thing I can promise you," he added more lightly, and with a smile. Vida looked up eagerly; but his next words were a disappointment. "And that is, that *you* will never lose anything through want of being in dead earnest about it. Do you know, Vida, that was what made me think of coming to *you* just now of all people?"

"What? I don't understand," said Vida puzzled.

"Do you remember one Sunday afternoon in Arran, when I walked along from Carrachan, and found you sitting on the

shore near the Manse? You had a Bible, and you were reading about that man—I forget his name—who put his hand on the ark, and was struck dead; and you said it was a shame, and you talked about God, and wondered whether He was good or not."

"I remember," said Vida; "and you were shocked, Arthur."

"Oh yes; I was shocked," said Arthur sarcastically. "I knew nothing about the whole thing, and cared less; but *anybody* can be shocked. *That* doesn't cost much. But I did not forget the way you talked, Vida. I had never heard anyone talk in that way before about God, in real earnest, you know, as if they really meant it, and cared about it; and I don't think I've heard anyone talk so since. Not long ago, when I was puzzling over all this, I felt

as if I had got into a different world from everyone I knew, and I couldn't bear it any longer. Then it came into my head, all at once, that I would come and see you. I knew you would listen to me, and take it all in earnest; and that if I said just what I felt about anything, you wouldn't think me strange, as other people would—for that is what you always do yourself. And so I came."

Then he was silent. Vida had no answer ready, and he expected none.

At this point they both felt there was nothing more to be said. Arthur rose to go, a movement which mademoiselle, who was tired of being completely ignored, and who had found the conversation very dry, was not sorry to observe.

"Eh, well!" she said to herself, when Arthur had gone, and Vida had returned to

the schoolroom. "I understand not such talk. In France when one is young, one is gay ; one amuses oneself, one talks of things agrecable ; but here, when the *jeunes gens* meet, they have the face long, the air *sérieux.* They discourse not but of theology—*morale.* Ah ! it is a strange people, this English !"

CHAPTER XI.

A YEAR had passed. It was March again, the end of March, and Vida was at home for a day or two. She had an important matter to discuss with her father and Nannie, and had just got leave of absence. The "preaching" holidays, as they are called in Scotland, were drawing near, and the girls had been informed that, owing to some pending alterations in the house, they were to have a fortnight on this occasion instead of the usual four or five days. Now Vida had just received a letter from London, from the mother of her most intimate school

friend, May Hasling, inviting her to accompany her daughter home, and to spend the holidays there; and she had come to Arran to discuss the invitation with Nannie, and, if possible, to gain her consent to her going, for she knew it was with Nannie principally that the decision rested. Nannie was very cautious at first in expressing an opinion.

"There's naething wrang wi' the *letter*," she remarked, after a minute study of Mrs. Hasling's note, which Vida had just brought down for her perusal; "but there's a' mainner o' folk i' the warld. What kin' o' lassie is she?"

"She's a nice girl," said Vida, "and she says her mother is much nicer than she is. She thinks more of her mother than anyone in the world, and she says she wishes she was more like her."

"Weel, that disna speak ill for her," remarked Nannie, "nor yet for the mither. And what like's the faither?"

"Oh, he's very delicate," replied Vida. "He can't go out anywhere. He stays in his own rooms all day, and only sees the rest of them for a little in the evening. So *he* can't be much harm, you know, Nannie."

"And hoo mony mair is there o' them?"

"May has a sister, but she is married," said Vida. "Then there's a little boy about twelve, and there's a brother, a doctor, who lives at home. He was married, but his wife is dead. I don't know much about him, but his mother is very fond of him, so I daresay he will be something like her."

"Weel, bairn, ye'll mak' oot a case, I hae nae doot," said Nannie, with a half-sad smile.

"And they live quietly, Nannie. You know they can't have a great many people coming, when Mr. Hasling is so delicate."

"Weel," persisted Nannie, "but ye'll be gaun to balls and pairties; and wha kens what the folk there may be like?"

"No, Nannie, we wouldn't. May is not allowed to go to balls, or large parties, because her mamma thinks she is too young. She is younger than I am—only sixteen and a half, and, of course, I would only be going where she went."

"They'll be rich folk, I'm thinking?" said Nannie.

"Yes—they are," replied Vida, as if she made the admission reluctantly; "but I don't think they *mind* it, Nannie. I don't think they count themselves any *better* for being rich. May doesn't."

Nannie sighed, and then asked wistfully

and undecidedly: "And what gars ye want to gang?"

"Oh Nannie, what a question!" said Vida, suddenly seating herself, as of old, on the little stool beside Nannie's chair. "Everything makes me want to go! I want to see London. Nowhere else in the world is like London. I can't tell you half of the things I would like to see there. And I want to know how rich people live in London. I would like to stay in a large grand house, just for a little—it would be such fun. And do you know, Nannie, sometimes they have such clever people coming to dinner—May's brother brings them—men that write books, you know; and wouldn't it be splendid to hear them talking? And, oh Nannie, May says that, as Miss Gordon doesn't open again till the 5th, we shall be in time to see the Academy!"

"And what aboot that?" said Nannie, dim notions of the Edinburgh Academy floating before her mind. "I wadna thoucht, when ye're jist awa' frae ae schule, ye wad been sae keen to see anither."

"Oh you dear old Nannie!" cried Vida, seizing both Nannie's hands, "it's not a school. It's *paintings*. It's all the paintings of all the best artists put together in a great exhibition."

"Oh, is that it?" said Nannie, enlightened. "Weel, I never could see the sense o' giein twa meanins to ae word."

"And now, Nannie," said Vida, "I've told you the reasons why I want to go, so now *you* can tell why you want me *not* to go."

"Eh, I dinna ken," said Nannie. "Ye'll maybe think this a puir bit, when ye come back."

"I don't think *that* deserves any answer," said Vida, shaking her head reproachfully.

"Weel," said Nannie meditatively, "I never was in Lunnon mysel', but a' the ill-doin' that ever I hear tell o', comes frae there."

"Oh no, Nannie, not quite all," said Vida persuasively. "There's a little in Edinburgh, you know, and in Glasgow, and even in Carrachan. And perhaps there's some *good* in London, too, that you *haven't* heard tell of."

"Maybe sae," said Nannie, sighing again.

"Nannie," said Vida, "you ought to have more faith."

"Deed and so I oucht," said Nannie, with sudden humility; "I'm sure I'll no contradick ye there."

"No, but Nannie, I mean you ought to have more faith in *me*. What is the good

of all your training, and teaching, and scolding, if you can't trust me in London for a fortnight? And why shouldn't you trust me? You know I have always been a good girl, since I grew up—that is," said Vida, correcting herself—"I suppose people are all bad, no matter how good they are—but I do what you tell me, Nannie, and I don't vex you or disappoint you."

"I'm no denyin' that," said Nannie hastily. "A' bairns hae their fauts; but whatever gaed wrang wi' you, ye wad aye tak' a tellin'. And maybe I bude to trust ye mair. Nae doot young folk maun see aboot them. And ye wad be nane the waur o' makin' twa or three freens, gin them ye hae come upon are worthy o' ye. But hoo are ye to win there? It's a lang road for twa lasses."

"There is a servant coming for May,"

said Vida, "her old nurse. She'll be a nice woman, just like you, I daresay, Nannie."

"And what aboot yer claes?" asked Nannie.

"They are wonderfully good just now, Nannie. You would hardly know any difference in them since Christmas."

"That's no very like," said Nannie incredulously.

"It's true, Nannie. Of course I shall need one or two new things, but not much. It doesn't matter though I have not so many things as other people. I daresay I shall look well enough. And, oh Nannie, you never, *never* would keep me from going to London for want of *clothes!*"

"If ye're to gang, ye maun gang decent," replied Nannie shortly; and then they began to discuss the details of Vida's ward-

robe. At Vida's request Nannie opened the subject that evening to Mr. Callander, who made no objection to Vida's going when he found that Nannie approved of it. When she entered the study the next morning, he lifted his head from a book nd said :

" Vida, if you go to London to visit those people that Nannie was speaking of, you will want some money."

"Yes, papa," replied Vida, very much surprised at the practical nature of the remark.

"Then," said Mr. Callander, "that suits very well." He fumbled in his pocket, and produced a letter. "This came by the post, yesterday afternoon," he said, surveying it with a certain air of suspicion ; "there is money in it. You may have heard that I have taken the office of clerk

in connection with our Central Committee. It seems there is a small salary attached to it. I had forgotten that, and—this came yesterday." Mr. Callander proceeded to extract a ten-pound note from the envelope, and continued in an aggrieved tone: "These odd sums arriving unexpectedly are embarrassing. I was uncertain what to do with it. But this suits very well." And he handed the note to Vida.

"Oh, thank you, papa," said Vida, with a flush of gratitude, "that makes everything right." Her bright face was worth looking at, but Mr. Callander did not see it; he was already buried in his book.

So all was arranged, and Vida and her friend found themselves one fine morning, about a fortnight later, in a railway carriage

starting for London, accompanied by the confidential servant of whom Vida had spoken. The two girls presented a strong contrast in appearance. They were both rather tall, but there the resemblance ceased. May was lightly and slenderly made, with fair pale complexion. Had she been languid, she would have looked delicate; but her glances, her tones, her movements, were all marked by unusual vivacity. Her blue eyes were quick and observant—a little restless perhaps—and capable of flashing with merriment or with mischief. She had the easy bearing and grace which may often be specially observed in London girls, but beyond this her manner had a peculiar charm of its own, which consisted in an odd mixture of precocity and child-likeness. Her dress was handsome though not showy, and a close observer might have

concluded that her toilet had not been made without considerable attention, from this circumstance, that none of those little etceteras were wanting which a lady may or may not wear as she chooses. All was quiet, and in perfect taste; still, nothing was omitted.

Vida, seated opposite, is dressed in the plainest of gray travelling-suits, of a rough, almost coarse material, with only a white frill at the neck, such as she had worn when she was twelve years old. Her round gray hat is innocent of feather or veil. But the rough colourless dress, in its almost quaint simplicity, seems but the fit and natural setting to the lovely glow of her face. It is evident that her life in town, with its necessary confinement, has not robbed Vida of her good health. She has lost her *breadth* certainly, and grown tall, but

withal there is an air of healthy development about her; and she has still a bright fresh tinge of colour in her cheeks, gathered long ago among the breezes on the Arran hills. Her bearing is erect and entirely natural, and agrees well with a certain artless independence, which is still the prevailing characteristic of her expression. Her mouth is larger than her friend's, and not so mobile, but there are indications there of firmness and strength that are wanting in the other; and the sudden sweet smile that breaks out over it, rarer than May's, means more when it does come. But Vida's full clear brown eyes are still the most striking feature of her face. They have the power, in an uncommon degree, of expressing what she is thinking and feeling. They have not lost their sincerity, nor that peculiar *directness* of glance, which, when she was a child,

made them almost seem to speak; but of late years you may discern a new thoughtfulness in them, and a certain humility, for Vida has begun to perceive that there are great facts and forces all around her of which as yet she understands but very little. But when her face is bright with happiness or expectation, as it is to-day, how those dark depths seem to shine, and what an unusual, almost startling, capacity do they reveal for wonder and enjoyment!

"Vida," said May, who had been scrutinising her friend for several minutes, "you look perfectly charming in that gray get-up."

"I am very glad," replied Vida, with a smile of pure pleasure.

May laughed. "How odd you are, Vida! Do you like people to tell you you look nice?"

"I like *you* to tell me," replied Vida readily.

"But why not everybody else, as well as me?"

"I don't know," said Vida, thinking. "I should feel as if they had no right. I suppose it is because you are my friend, and because I know that you care for myself first, before you think of my looks."

"Well," remarked May. "I think it is very nice to have strangers admire one too."

"Do you?" said Vida; "I don't think it matters much about strangers."

"Vida," said May suddenly, "you are like mamma. She never cared anything for admiration or compliments, though she is so handsome—you don't know how handsome she is, but you will, to-night; but if papa thought she looked nice, or if any of us

children said she was pretty, then she was pleased."

A short pause followed. Then May broke out with:

"I do like that gray dress. I almost envy you it, Vida."

"Well, get one the same," said Vida, smiling.

May shook her head. "I would in a minute, but I can't afford to wear a dress like that."

"What do you mean, May?" exclaimed Vida. "This dress was only—I forget what it was a-yard—but it was very cheap; you can't *afford* it?"

"I didn't say I couldn't afford the dress. I said I couldn't afford to *wear* it, Vida. I mean that if *I* got a coarse gray dress, made plain like that, I should look—just nobody and nothing. But I really think

it sets you off. It makes you look—something quite uncommon."

"I'm not sure that that is a compliment—from you," said Vida.

"No; but really, Vida, it makes you look splendid. That's what I mean. I can't afford to wear such things, and you can."

"Well," said Vida, with a merry laugh, "it's a good thing if I *can* afford to wear it in that sense, for in the *other* sense I can't afford to wear any other."

It was a long journey, but it came to an end at last. Late in the evening the train reached the station, and, after a long drive, the girls arrived at May's home. As the door was opened to them, and Vida caught a glimpse of the spacious hall within, and the broad staircase that seemed quite

a long way off, a verse out of the Psalms came oddly into her mind about one's "feet being set in a large place." She had never seen a house like this before, and the mere width and height of the space before her gave her a bounding sense of freedom. They had seen lights in the drawing-room from outside, and May led the way up there; but the room was empty.

"Papa will be in his own parlour," said May, "and Gerald must have gone to bed. But I saw a light in mamma's dressing-room. Mamma will be there. We must go and find her, Vida. Come along;" and she caught Vida's hand.

"Stop, May," said Vida, drawing back; "I had better wait here till you come back. Go yourself first."

"No, no, I can't wait!" cried May; "I

want to show you to mamma now, this minute. You *must* come."

So Vida was hurried, rather against her sense of propriety, along a wide corridor to a door, which May first knocked at, and then burst open, as if, on second thoughts, she could not wait longer. "Mamma!" she cried breathlessly, "we have come, and here is my friend, Vida Callander."

A lady rose from a writing-desk, and came forward to meet them. May flung herself for a moment into her arms, and then, catching Vida's hand again, drew her forward instead. Vida lifted her eyes to those of her friend's mother; then, contrary to custom, she dropped them again, not so much embarrassed as overwhelmed by the gracious stately presence in which she found herself. Vida's instincts were ready and unerring; and she knew in a moment

that this woman was as a queen among all the women whom she had ever seen. Her countenance was beautiful, with enduring beauty; for her clear rich complexion and grandly-cut features were but a small part of it. The real charm lay in that which is supposed to make, and often does make, beauty a thing of the past—namely, the lines of advancing time, that impress of character which year by year writes itself more legibly upon the face. In her case those lines about the mouth and eyes were so beautiful, so noble, so benignant, that youth might well have envied them. And then, as Vida quickly felt, she was not more a queen than a *mother*, all the more a mother, not the less, because she was so much else. It takes grand women to make such mothers; and upon such their motherhood sits like a crown of tender glory. Dimly feeling all

this, Vida stood entranced. She did not attempt to reply to Mrs. Hasling's words of welcome; she scarcely heard them. She only knew that her voice, when it ceased, left a rich deep memory in the ear, like a long note from an organ.

"What made you so shy with mamma, Vida?" asked May, as they were going to bed; "I never saw you shy before."

"I was astonished," replied Vida, "rather than shy. I couldn't help it. I never saw anyone like her before."

"I knew you would say that!" cried May triumphantly. "And she is so clever, Vida. She can talk to Herbert about all his science things, just like another doctor; and she knows—nearly everything. But you needn't be afraid of her. She never says sharp things, or laughs at people. She

is as good and patient as if she were quite stupid."

Nevertheless, Vida was not herself for the next day or two. In Mrs. Hasling's presence a sort of reverential awe possessed her; she was subdued, silent, as one receiving a revelation. Meanwhile Mrs. Hasling was studying her, and every day with more satisfaction. The young ladies of London society were not generally to Mrs. Hasling's liking, and the friends whom her daughter had chosen, or chanced to make, hitherto, had never won her hearty approval. As she came to see more of Vida, she rejoiced that May should have the benefit of such companionship, for she recognised in her character elements of depth as well as simplicity, in which she well knew May's was greatly wanting. And

she could not but be touched by the unmistakable reverence with which the girl regarded her. Not that she was unaccustomed to such reverence and loving devotion. She was a woman of great influence, and she knew it, and thanked God for it, as one of the most precious gifts He had bestowed upon her. But with her the possession of such influence was a high and sacred trust; and every fresh proof of it produced, in such a mind as hers, only new humility and new earnestness.

"Well," said May—it was three or four days after their arrival, and Mrs. Hasling, May, and Vida were seated in the drawing-room with their work—"well," said May, in the old woman's manner which she sometimes assumed, "I have got my wish! I have introduced you, mamma and Vida, to one another, and you are mutually satisfied,

and I have nothing more left to desire! Except one thing," with a sly glance at Vida. "It is a pity that Vida does not make more use of her conversational powers. There she sits, as still as a mouse, and leaves me to do all the chattering, which is very hard, for I am sure everybody knows it isn't in my line. Mamma, do you know what Vida said in bed last night?" she continued, with another mischievous look, but really speaking from a determination to break down Vida's reserve; "she said that she wished you would treat her like a daughter, while she is here, and call her Vida, and tell her things —just as you do with me."

Vida had looked up with a sudden glance and flush at the beginning of this speech, as if about to interrupt; then, changing her mind, she bent again over her work, with a

deeper flush than before. Mrs. Hasling was watching her.

"Come to me, my child," she said gently, and drew a low cane-seat beside her own arm-chair. Vida rose and went; Mrs. Hasling laid her hand lightly on her shoulder. "And so you wish me to make a daughter of you?" she said.

The beautiful grace of her kindness, the tender modulation of her tone, saying more than the words expressed, brought unaccustomed tears to Vida's eyes. For a few moments she did not try to speak, then she lifted her head, and said appealingly: "I have no mother"—but there she stopped short, for she saw that tears were slowly gathering, too, in the gracious eyes that looked down upon her.

As for May, this was a little beyond her. "How things do turn out!" she exclaimed,

jumping up in dismay, and looking from one to the other; "I'm sure I never meant to make you both cry. But *I* don't want to cry too, and it's very infectious, so I'll go off and water the flowers, and you can talk it out by yourselves." A long talk it was, and a memorable one to Vida. Mrs. Hasling drew her on, by one question after another, to tell of her home and her childhood; and Vida, seeing that the questions were prompted by genuine interest, answered each more fully than the last, till she forgot her reserve. She had never felt before as she did this afternoon. It seemed as if her world was opening and widening indefinitely before her, in the delight of talking to such a listener. As for Mrs. Hasling, she enjoyed the narration. The simple originality of Vida's language alone would have pleased her; but, beyond that,

she watched the signs of character in the eye, and voice, and manner of the speaker, with the rare pleasure of one who is not often or easily satisfied; and when Vida, warned by the growing darkness that it was getting late, became suddenly silent, she drew her with a firm tender pressure to her side, as one might a newly-found treasure.

"How bright you look, Vida!" said May, when Vida came up to dress for dinner, "and what a colour you have. I wish you would give me half of it for the concert to-night!"

END OF VOL. I.

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